RED

Prologue

When Marcus Thomas graduated from the FBI academy. He finished at the top of his class and had mastered self-defense tactics and martial arts; he had carried it to the next level. He found that he was very proficient with almost any kind of weapon. He tested very high for intelligence and had an excellent psychological evaluation. He was assigned to a local office which made him incredibly happy because he did not have to move his family as they enjoyed the D.C. area, and they lived just north of Crystal City.

With the rank he had obtained he could support his family comfortably. He had exited the Marines as a Master Sargent after 12 years of service. This was after four tours in Afghanistan and no Red Hash marks on his sleeves. Some of his friends had given him a hard time getting no higher rank, but he was comfortable with his rank and who he was.

He had established a life with his family that they all enjoyed. Especially his six-year-old daughter Kathrine. He called her Kat; she was his pride and joy. There was a small park across the street from his house. They spent many hours there playing when he had the time. Life for him had settled into a comfortable and enjoyable thing.

Of course, as it is with all things, his life started to change. The type of cases he started to work on paired his abilities with some very evil people. The kind of people that would try to gain the advantage against you by kidnapping your family. Which often led to the agent getting a video of their family being tortured. Sometimes in the most heinous of ways. Or they would just kill your whole family to crush your soul. He feared both and hoped and prayed that neither would ever happen.

They do not tell you about these situations in training. You just hear about it from the more seasoned agents. Still life went on as it always does. He tried to make sure that his family never saw this side of his emotions. He kept these feelings locked up, as well as all the fear and anger that was associated with them.

Sometimes while living our lives, we tend to get to the point that we might not be as attentive to things happening around us as we should be, and this is where the trouble can come in. It sneaks into our lives in a manner that we never see coming. Life will give Marcus something he never expected.

Marcus had been working on two cases. One that he was about to finish. All that needed to be done was the paperwork. The other was a sore spot for him. This Lord of War was a very evil person. He specialized in Drugs and Firearms, and it made no difference to him how many people died along the way. He had been in business for a dozen years and Marcus had been assigned to put him away and remove this threat from the face of the earth. He was told he had no restrictions on how this was done, and he had been giving this evil monster a life of living Hell for the last several months. Marcus had received several threatening letters and phone calls. He was very worried about this guy, and it was starting to show in his home life.

Marcus had rented a Limousine for Kat and his wife Bella. Kat had a dance recital and Marcus wanted to make the night special. They would go to the recital and then the limousine would whisk them off to dinner and ice cream. It would be a super special night for Kat. He knew that Bella was looking forward to it as well.

Marcus had taken the day off and they had all been goofing off and just having a wonderful time in general. When it was time to go, they all came down the steps of the Brownstone together. Just then Marcus stopped as Kat and Bella walked towards the limousine to get in. He thought that he had forgotten his phone. Just as Marcus started to walk towards them, he saw a bright flash of light.

Bella opened the door of the car, and the explosive device went off. The six-pound copper plate attached to the inside of the door ripped through Bella and Kat as if they were not there.

Marcus did not see any of this, the concussion had thrown him back violently into the large brick pillar at the bottom of the steps. He had been injured severely. He was still conscious and as his eyes cleared, he looked over at where Bella and Kat had been. They were no more. Nothing left but a large blood stain and other things that he did not want to see.

Marcus passed out just after that. He was slightly aware of being in the back of an ambulance as he faded away again. The next thing he remembered was being in an operating room. A big man above him was lowering a mask down onto his face and that is the last thing he remembered. He had no idea that when he awoke, he would be something that he had never counted on being…

General explanation of Prologue

Agent Marcus Thomas is about to learn the hard way that life is not as it seems. His whole life is about to change, and he will lose everything that means anything to him. His heart will be broken into a million little pieces, and it will never again be the same. Some holes left in the Heart can never be filled… It would be decades before he even knew this. Currently, he is twenty-seven years old. The Year is 2015

Now, Part # 1 of Red

RED
I - Discovery

By

Victor Cook

Year – 2365 AD

Red – 13 sat on top of a large pile of red rocks and contemplated his circumstances.

Thirteen because this was his production number. He often wondered if this was unlucky, his number.

RED ROCK… all the rocks here were red. As was the dirt, dust, and everything else. He was curious why red was part of a symbolization of the God of War for humans. Although he thought this strange, he assumed it was because the color of blood was red. He had gotten his nickname because of the Red Planet. Mars is where he was stationed when he was not in use. The armor he wore was self-contained so that he needed no air supply and worried about no radiation. He rotated his right forearm up into his field of view and checked his vitals again. Same as, well…Same as always.

He had the understanding that his exoskeleton was made from the stuff of the God's. Meteorites he was told. A smooth blend of Nickle-Iron, Gold, Diamonds, and a multitude of other metal he had no idea of. They had all gone through a solidification process in their molds with high heat and extreme pressure in a low microgravity environment. He knew this much. As far as he knew it was indestructible.

The armor provided everything he needed. Air and sustenance for the human part left of him.

The exoskeleton pushed his abilities to twenty or thirty times greater than the strongest human on earth. He had also gone through a bio-chemical DNA enhancement that had altered his DNA from the standard double-sided helix to a ten-strand helical DNA profile. This accomplished many things. It extended all the standard human body clocks and made him immortal as far as he knew. It increased his intelligence dramatically and took away any chance of cancer all the way down to a common cold. He had no medical issues for three hundred and fifty years.

Red sat there on Mars waiting for his next set of orders and a shuttle that would eventually pick him up and take him back to earth.

A strange thought occurred to him. He did not understand why after all the improvements he had suffered. Why could he not fly? He always wanted to fly. He found out that after the DNA changes he could move physical things with his mind and even levitate several feet off the ground. Much to his disbelief, he could not fly. They did not want him to fly!

He was attached to and worked directly for the Human Dispatch Division. He only reported to the Director of this division of the CIA and the Department of Justice. He was responsible to no one else, not even the President. Red was classified as a Hunter/Stalker/Killer.

This was a unique breed of agent. He was the last in the only group ever made. The other twelve were who knew where. He had heard that there were no more materials available to produce them. They were perfect in every way. Well, he knew he was almost perfect, he had seen a few small flaws in himself but never told anyone.

He knew that in his mind that no other HSK knew these things. His and their memories had been wiped clean, and a new profile had been installed in their memory. Personal memories had been wiped clean upon completion of the indoctrination in readiness for their jobs.

He had only one memory left. He did not understand why. He could clearly see the blood-stained area of the sidewalk outside the car. He could remember the explosion, the smell of the acrid smoke in the air, and see the scattered body parts of his wife and child. He thought of it often and could not understand why he remembered it. He never told anyone. Never… Why would he hold onto such a memory for three hundred and fifty years and not understand why? It was supposed to be wiped clean. Sometimes he wished it had. Other times he was glad he had it. It made him more than a machine.

All this happened in 2015, and it was now 2365. This made him feel old even though he was only twenty-seven years old when all this happened. At this moment he felt odd in the respect that he was having all this human emotion.

He was normally cold, calculating and only thought of the issue at hand. It was these long waits on the red planet, they brought all these feelings to the surface in his mind. He pondered this to no avail.

He was brought out of his reverie by the small green light flashing in the bottom right corner of his visor. He looked down at the inbound message.

Date: 2365 @ 19:00

Shuttle arriving @ 21:00

Report to Director upon arrival!

Finally, work or something like it. He was bored and ready for something to do. He stood and looked out across the dark black sky and waited for the arrival of the shuttle.

The shuttle arrived and he was locked in his seat as a large tether of cables, wires and tubes were plugged into a port on his arm that he opened for this purpose. Diagnostics, he hated them. It was the only time he lost a little bit of control over himself. Even though the exoskeleton was totally self-contained and self-supporting it was an agency requirement prior to arrival that he had to endure. Cold fusion drove the exoskeleton and required no maintenance nor additional material to remain active.

The flight back to earth was quick. He departed the ship and was escorted to a tram that took him to the Directors office. He went into a small room and waited for the signal to enter the office. When the light came on and he heard the small ping in his helmet he walked into the office as the door opened. He stood and waited to be addressed by the Director.

A full head of gray hair was all he saw as the chair facing him was facing the window looking out over D.C. When the chair turned to face him, it was a New Director. A large man with several modifications made to his body. Nowhere near what his armor was. With the recognition of the new Director, he asked and was given a command code that verified this Director’s position of authority and his ability to give commands and assign work.

“How may I be of service?” He wondered if his real voice sounded this way or was it an electronic voice made for him to use in the few brief communications he had with humans. Most of his mission data was downloaded after the diagnostics were completed on the inbound trip. Oddly enough he had received no download this time.

After Red’s question the large man turned the chair back towards the window. “We have received some strange downloads from your diagnostics on both Mars and during your return trip. How are you feeling? Everything OK?” Red stood there puzzled; the Director could not see his face through his darkened visor nor the puzzled look there. He never knew that they could download anything from him while he was on Mars.

He was confused. He had never been asked a question like this before. Only his Creator had ever asked these kinds of questions, and he knew that his Creator was long dead. “I have no issues; the diagnostics should have told you that.” He felt something he thought was or could be worried, almost

bordering on apprehension. This for him was quite a strange feeling to have. Especially for something that was not supposed to have feelings.

“Don’t you find it odd Red that you received no download on the trip in.” The large man remained turned looking out the window.

“Why are you asking me these questions? I am here for work, not conversation.” Red took a small step back away from the desk. He felt funny and out of place. This was a first for him. Never had he felt like this in this room.

The door opened behind him, and six large men walked into the room and stood in a semi-circle behind Red. If he had hair on the back of his neck it would have stood up.

The Director turned and stood. He is as tall as me but not as large, he thought to himself. Red stood seven feet tall and weighed seven hundred and fifty pounds. The Director was an equal height at seven feet tall, and maybe three hundred pounds. Red was weighing all situations and always assessed any room he walked into. He just never thought that he would have to do it in this room.

“It is time to take you out of service Red. You have completed more than ten thousand successful dispatches for the agency, and we have new options. You are no longer viable.” With that the Director lunged across the desk.

It was as if his throat landed in my hand, Red thought. I lifted him up with my left hand and quickly and gently punched him in the neck. While he struggled to catch his breath my right hand went to my thigh and withdrew the baton that rested there. At the same time there was a mad rush of men behind him, and the baton proceeded to do its worst. In the matter of a few moments the six machines lay on the floor of the office in pieces.

The visor in Red’s mask rolled back as he held the Director in a firm grip. The Directors eyes opened wide as Red looked at him. He saw the crystalline blue eyes change to a blue so clear it looked like the flame of a gas stove.

“You know only the Creator can decommission me, no one else. Not even you!” Red turned and looked at the pile of parts behind him and said, “A bunch of robots to replace me?” He slowly sat the Director down on the desk and only relaxed his grip enough to allow him to talk.

“Red, the other 12 HSK’s are gone. You are the last. We have noticed so much more human emotion in your brain scans, and we can no longer afford to count on you for this type of work. We must shut you down now and forever.” Red turned away to look out the window at the night sky of Washington. He stared for a moment and turned back to the Director.

“I know that I am not supposed to harm you, but I cannot allow you to harm me either. Do you think that the Three primary Laws of Robotics are in play here? No SIR, above all else I am programmed to protect myself so that the mission can be completed.”

Red pulled the large man up so that they were face to face. He stared long and hard with those ice-cold blue eyes into the face of the man who was supposed to take care of him. The Director closed his eyes and trembled. Red now held the director with both hands. One on either side of his head.

Red looked long and hard at the trembling man and said, “Good Luck with shutting me down!” With that Red’s hands slowly closed together until his palms met. He let the now lifeless body slide to the floor. He bent and wiped his hands on the already stained shirt. As Red came back into focus, he noticed an alarm sounding. His visor rolled back down and darkened as he moved towards the door.

II - Escape

Red walked through the closed door to the tram platform, the door flew across the platform area as he jumped down onto the track area. He started at a slow run down the tunnel.

It is amazing how something so large could be so quiet and handle itself with such agility thought the very large man behind the corner of the far end of the tunnel away from Red.

Red had made his way several hundred yards down the tunnel before he heard shots being fired over his shoulder. He took a small turn down a side access tunnel. While on the run he had been reviewing maps of the tunnel in his visor while he ran. He suddenly stopped and removed a large iron grate from the floor of the tunnel. He hoisted the grate up over his head and dropped through the opening depositing the grate back into its place.

When Red landed at the bottom of the rain run off tunnel he ran. He could get lost quickly in the city and find a place to hide so that he could come up with a plan. Red stopped dead in his tracks. “What am I doing?” This and several other thoughts ran through his mind. This was all new to him. Thinking like this. Usually all he had to think about were the parameters of the mission he was on. Not about self-preservation.

He was so lost in thought he did not hear the large man come up behind him. Red felt a large strong hand land on his shoulder. Red tried to spin around to meet his assailant, but he did not turn, instead he dropped to his knee at the

insistence of the large hand. “Easy now Red, I am here to take you back. Do not make this hard on yourself.”

Red pushed up hard off the concrete from the kneeling position he was held in. As he gained the height needed, he struck out with a back kick with his left leg. He thought that he had struck the concrete wall as he was pushed forward out of the grasp of his attacker. As he spun around to meet the enemy, he saw his large wet footprint in his assailant’s chest. There stood a Cyborg as large as himself. He had seen them before. Designed for the military for use in severe battle engagements with human combatants. They were strong, quick and could think on their feet.

“If you leave now tin man, I will spare your life. I have no quarrel with you.”

“Not gonna happen Redman, you are going back with me.”

“Bad choice on your part.” Red said. With that Red jumped up with a forward kick to his assailant’s chest. As he landed the Cyborg stumbled back a slight bit. When Red landed, he then caught his enemy on the side of the head with a spinning back kick. Red quickly turned to slam a roundhouse ridge hand into the cyborgs neck but no one was there. Red noticed that his olfactory sensors had caught the smell of human flesh and the plastic coating on wires burning in the air. The Cyborg stumbled; he was very shaky as he stood against the tunnel wall. Pieces of amor plate now fell from under his now disheveled shirt. Red smiled, “I thought I had lost my touch.” He mumbled to himself.

Red watched as the small pieces of armor plate fell to the tunnel floor. He looked at the Cyborg and smiled. “I hope you brought more armor than that.” The Cyborg smiled a little as he tried to stand erect. The Cyborg coughed up blood as he stood and lunged towards Red.

Red took a long step back and caught the Cyborg with a side kick to the throat. The Cyborg wheezed and fell forward making a sickening crunching sound as he hit the tunnel floor. His head laying at an obtuse angle to his body.

Red turned and ran out through the end of the tunnel out onto a small lawn and then up a grade into the woods on the side of a quiet street. He squatted down in the undergrowth to gather his thoughts. He looked around and had a strange feeling he knew this area not from work but rather from another place and time. He did not realize that the tunnel system took him this far south of D.C.

He superimposed a map of the area for the year 2015 inside his visor. He did not know why. He stood and looked around slowly and thought for a moment

he felt a tear run down his cheek. He knew this was impossible, but he felt sorrow and loss and the sudden recognition of the area hit him like a ton of bricks.

Two blocks down the street is where it all began. He saw the whole scene in his mind's eye. Fresh and vivid as if he were there again. He saw his self, lying on the sidewalk and could not bear to look over at that terrible spot across from the car. Blood and bone and that smell. What was that? Burning flesh? He opened his visor for a moment as he felt sick and thought he might throw up. He reached up to touch his face and break this dream cycle and came back to reality and almost cried out as he felt the wet on his cheek.

He stumbled down the street to the point where it all started. He was pulling up maps and news articles as well as everything else related to that day. It all flashed across his visor. The pictures and words swirled around inside the visor until he caught a glimpse of two pictures from the Washington Post. They were pictures of him and his family before the incident. He locked onto these pictures and moved them to a special place where he would have access to them anytime.

As he fell back, he ended up sitting on the steps of the brownstone home behind him. He sat there in disbelief and shock as he tried to understand what happened to him and his family that day. As well as a seven hundred fifty pound seven-foot-tall man could. He tried to hide behind the brickwork on the stairs. He was attempting to gather himself as he lay back amongst all this awkward human emotion. He heard a sound behind him. It felt distant and removed. He shook his head and turned and looked up the stairs.

At the top of the stairs at the door to the building he saw a very old Black woman with an arm full of packages fumbling with the door trying to get it open. He stood and walked up the stairs and grabbed the door handle pulling it open. He had to catch the little woman as he pulled her through the opening.

"Thank you, big man. I thought I was gonna have to put all that stuff down to open the door." Red thought it was funny that she said nothing about the way he looked. He proffered his arm and helped her down the steps. He sat again at the bottom of the steps and cupped his head in his hand.

"What is the matter honey? You all right?" She dropped the packages and sat down beside him. She reached over and touched the visor next to his cheek. Red raised the visor, and she cupped her hand around his cheek and jaw. He felt warmth he had not felt in a long time. He looked over at the old woman and smiled as the tears rolled down his face.

“You are going to be fine honey, just put your faith in the Creator.” Red almost fell off the steps. “How do you know anything about the Creator?” He said in disbelief. She just smiled.

“He was my Great Grand Father three times over. He has been gone for over three hundred years. The family tradition carries on you know…”

“Big man I have a picture of you upstairs on my piano with the rest of the family at that time. I saw you coming down the street and I knew who you were right away. I have heard more stories about you than you could ever imagine.”

Red was awestruck, he was confused, excited, and had a lot of questions.

“When I saw you coming big man, I grabbed this stuff and came down here to warn you. We need to talk, but not here. YOU need to get out of here NOW.”

Red stood and looked around. He was so caught up in the moment and the flurry of emotion’s he had just gone through he did not think to seek cover. He knew someone would be after him soon.

“Big man there is a small warehouse south of here. It belongs to an Oil Company. It has a sign on it that says Talbots Oil. I want you to go there and wait for me. We need to talk. You go now and I will be there shortly. There is someone I need to get a hold of first.”

Red bent slightly and smiled at the old woman, he could not ever remember doing this. “What is your name madame?” She looked at him and smiled back and simply said. “Ester.” With that Red strode off back across the street to the wooded area and disappeared. He headed towards the small industrial area not far from here and he remembered the map overlay from earlier. He was optimistic and had a strange feeling in his chest.

III – Meeting Family

Red found the Talbots Oil warehouse and observed it from a safe distance. He scanned it with thermal, infrared, sound, and everything else he had. It appeared safe but he approached it with great caution. He found a roof access ladder and broke the lock on the ladder access gate. Without thinking he put his foot on the first rung of the ladder, and it broke before he put his full weight on it.

He backed away from the ladder and looked for another way in. He found purchase to the building through a large window at the back of the building and made his way in. He walked the floor of the building slowly and quietly and found a large stack of skids loaded with cases of oil to hide behind. A brief time later he heard a door in front of the building rattle open. Funny thing was he heard two sets of feet padding across the floor headed in his direction. “Big man you in here? Do not worry, the person I have with me you will want to meet.”

Red stuck his head around the corner of the stack of skids to see who the extra person was. Beside the old woman was a large Black man. He was along in years but seemed to be in good shape and moved well for his years. Red walked around the corner into full view of the pair. “Holy crap Ester, you weren’t kidding. He is the guy in the pictures. We thought you were dead big man.”

Red walked closer and as he did, he recognized the man. “Creator, what, how are you here. I was told a couple of hundred years ago that you were dead.”

“Hold on big man, he was my father. He lived quite a while after he was supposed to be gone. I helped with that problem. Do you have a name perchance? Ester and I were only raised knowing you as big man. My name is Quinn by the way.”

“I am Red, they used Mars as my off-duty station and I just kind of picked the name up along the way. I am sure that I have a proper name, but I could not tell you what it is.”

With that Quinn walked over to the stack of skids, bent over, and placed his finger on a bio reader under the edge of the skid. The whole stack of skids started moving up to revel a large elevator car as it stopped. Quinn turned to look at Red and Ester. “Okay, everybody on board. We need to get below where we are safe and protected. I have this place set up to cover our tracks and block any electronic tracking devices or other things that might lead the goon squads here to us.”

This place better be well protected Red thought to himself because I know they will use everything they have to try and find me.

The elevator car sunk just a little bit as Red stepped on the car floor. Ester grabbed Red’s arm to steady herself and Red noticed that she was having a tough time breathing as the car went down. Once the car reached the bottom Quinn stepped off the elevator car and punched a code into another box on the wall. There was a loud clacking sound and the thrumming of electricity as some sort of circuit seemed to be completed.

Quinn smiled, “We are safe now. We all need to head down to my office so that we can catch Red up on what is going on in the world.”

Down a short hall and into a large office/lab area as Quinn walked straight over to a computer and sat down. He entered his access code and turned on several things. He motioned Red over to the terminal. “Look at the screen Red.”

Red looked over Quinn’s shoulder. “What is that stuff falling in the warehouse we were just in.” Red exclaimed.

Quinn smiled. “It is a mist of dust and dirt. It will cover the floor and make it appear that no one has been here in a long time. It will allow us to use this monitor to see if anyone has been walking around up there while we were down here. If any footprints are on the floor now, they belong to someone other than us. See the large chair in the lab there Red, please have a seat and let’s talk about you and the rest of us.”

Red sat in a huge chair and looked at all the equipment in the lab area. It was a lot like the place he came from. Quinn rolled a desk chair over in front of Red and sat down. He then directed Ester to roll over another chair and sit down beside them.

Quinn looked at Red with a serious look in his eyes. “Red, do you know why you were brought in at this time?” Red just kind of looked around as if looking for the answer in the air. “The Director said that I was brought in to be decommissioned.” He said.

Quinn eyes squinted just a little. “Wow, which was a very straight forward and stupid thing for him to say. I assume he is dead now?”

I let him know that no one could decommission me but the Creator. He seemed to disagree. So, I decommissioned him.”

Quinn smiled and trembled just a bit at that thought. What a visual that was. “Good, that bastard needed to be decommissioned anyway. They were not going to turn you off Red; they were going to destroy you. Before they did and while you were out there certain things that you could have provided them with. I am going to use Ester here to make my point. Look at this blood work analysis for Ester and let me know what you think.” With that Quinn handed Red a lab report and sat back in his chair as Red looked through the papers. When he was done, he laid it down on the arm of the chair and looked at Ester.

“Terminal Lung Cancer with maybe three to four months to live.” Ester’s head dropped down, and she took a long breath. “Quinn, I understand the analysis but what has this got to do with me?”

“Red if you will allow me, I would like to show you. It will take a little time, and you will have to trust me. Can you do that?”

Red scooted out to the edge of the massive seat and put his face in front of Quinn’s. “You would not do anything to me to abuse this trust would you Quinn? The consequences would be severe.”

“Red, I promise that I hope to be a big part of your future and hope that you will be a big part of mine. This is the best way that I can demonstrate to you why they wanted you back.”

Red slid back in the chair. “Let’s get on with it then.” Quinn got up and walked over to the far wall and rolled a small cloth covered table back over next to the arm of Red’s chair. He pulled the cloth back from over the table and picked up a syringe.

“Open your visor for me Red.” Red looked long and hard into Quinn’s eyes. After a long moment, the visor rolled back. “You will feel a little stick on your neck but other than that there should be no problem.” Red could see a small amount of blood in the syringe as Quinn pulled his hand back.

Quinn stood up and walked over to Ester. He took a cotton swab from the rolling table and dipped it into a small vessel of alcohol there. He rubbed a small area on Ester’s arm and then injected the syringe of Red’s blood into her arm. “Okay Ester, please go and lay down in the back for a little while. I will be in shortly to get a sample of you blood.” Quinn turned and walked back over to the chair next to Red and sat back down as Ester walked down the hall to lay down.

IV – Catching Up

Quinn and Red sat and talked while Ester was resting. Quinn filled Red in on all the junk that the Government had filled Red’s head with. Quinn then told him about what was happening in the real world. Red came to understand that most of the people he had terminated had been for political gain and domination and not for the security of the nation. Quinn had on several occasions been taken aback by Red’s emotion and the expressions of anger and rage. He had worried that since he was within arm’s length he might serve as the proverbial messenger.

“So Red, you seem to be teaming with emotion. From my studies and the use of all of my fathers and grandfathers notes and journals you should be without any of the emotional baggage we have to go through life with?”

“Quinn, I am as lost as you on this issue. It started several years ago a little bit at a time. On one of my inbound trips, I got a download that changed things. I did not realize it at first as it was a gradual change. The longer I went on the more I noticed things about myself I had never experienced before. Like anger, sorrow and a multitude of other things as well. I was almost in tears when I met Ester. I do not remember crying at any time in my career. Never at any time…”

“Quinn.” Ester called from the room in the back of the lab. Quinn stood and walked back to the room Ester had been resting in. He was gone for a few minutes and Red was starting to wonder what Quinn was up to. When he returned with Ester Red noticed that she did not seem to be as drawn and tired as she had been when she left to go lay down. Quinn handed Red a piece of paper and Red studied it in silence.

“If this report is correct Quinn, she is cancer free and from what I can see she is in tremendous shape for a woman her age.” Ester smiled as she rubbed the back of Red’s neck and then his cheek. “A small injection of my blood did this?”

“Well.” Quinn said. “It is a lot more complicated that you might think Red. Quinn paused for a moment to figure out what the right words to say might be. “Red as you may or may not know several decades ago you were updated with an experimental update, and you were the only one to get it. It was discovered that you were the only HK who could utilize the update. Red pondered for a minute about Quinn’s words. “Well come on Man, tell me what I was updated with. I am waiting with bated breath.”

Quinn looked back into Red’s crystalline blue eyes and was almost scared to tell him. “Red, they injected you with an experimental Nano-Bot, it is supposed to help in your everyday task. It helps to keep you healthy and repairs and replaces any broken or damaged systems in your body and frame.” Red’s eyes got big, and you could see the red flush of anger cross his face. “Red, don’t get upset, the Nano-Bots developed into something much more that they were designed for.” Red looked at Quinn and yelled his name. “QUINN.” Quinn took a small step back and spoke. “Now wait a minute Red, let me finish explaining. This is a good thing for you. While you are on a mission if something happens perchance to you exoskeleton it will be repaired almost immediately.”

It was at first intended to replicate and replace components of your exoskeleton and maintain your overall mechanical health. It developed into much more than that. After it had adapted itself to your physiology it changed its own nature to rebuild or replace any portion of your body. Anything from eye lashes to the maintenance of your cold fusion reactor.

Short of being vaporized by a laser or blown to bits in a major nuclear blast everything of your being would be replaced or rebuilt in short order. Even in the event of the blast, if there were enough of you left around. I would suppose you would be reassembled by the bots to the state you were in before anything happened. Of course, it has never been tested, but I assume from what I have read, it could happen."

With that Red grabbed his left hand in his right and with much effort twisted his left hand off at the wrist. He dropped the hand at his wrist on the large chair arm. Quinn almost fell off the stool he was on. They both noticed a low-pitched thrumming sound and a strange odor in the air.

The hand seemed to gently move towards the wrist, it moved about a bit. Red noticed it felt a bit warm in that area. In the matter of a few minutes Red was moving the now reattached hand as if it had never been removed. Quinn started writing in the pad he had on the chair arm.

Quinn jotted furiously in the note pad for many moments. He laid his pencil down and looked up at Red. Red cocked his head to one side as a puppy would as if to say, Yeah! What's next?

"So Red, do you have many unique abilities? If so, what might they be? With this Red seemed to smile a bit, which left Quinn with a very unsettled feeling. That little smile from this creature could mean many things. Quinn noticed his arm lying on the chair started to rise a bit. Just a small bit at first but then the chair and platform Red was sitting in were several feet off the floor. As he looked up at the base of the chair platform he followed its movement back through the lab into the next space. A good thirty feet away. When it stopped Red was no longer in the chair.

Quinn looked straight up and there sat Red. No chair just Red. Red vanished and reappeared across the room as the chair slowly sat back on the floor. When the chair touched down Red glimmered in an off shade of blue for a second and was gone. The chair suddenly appeared in front of Quinn again, but Red was still not to be seen. Quinn reached over and felt around in the chair for Red but nothing was there. Quinn felt a small tap on his shoulder and there stood Red. Quinn was three steps across the floor when he stopped and turned around. "How does such a big man and large chunk of metal move without making noise?"

Red actually laughed out loud, "Should I be offended by being called a large chunk of Metal Quinn?"

“No oh no, crap I did say that out loud!” Quinn walked closer to Red. “How long have you been able to do that?”

“Move myself and other things and disappear? Well, for several.”

Quinn interrupted him. “No Red, I mean laugh out loud?” Red dropped his head a slight bit to ponder Quinn’s last statement. “I am not sure; Ester saw me crying earlier and this phenomenon puzzles me as well. As of late I seem to be or have much more human emotion than I can ever remember.”

Quinn thought about this for a while. He concluded that this could work for Red in either way. For the better and of course for the worst…

“Ester is whom I want to talk about. Just an injection of my blood and bots cured her. The cancer was completely gone in the last test results.” Quinn took his seat back next to the chair and Red followed suit.

“It was your nanobot gilded blood alone Red. We discovered long ago that every living thing has a harmonic signature or vibration if you will. The nanobots in your … blood, body, structure or whatever are attuned to you. Specifically, to you. They will die upon the injection or ingestion into a foreign body or substance. You are the only environment they can live in. As a point of fact in order for you to have cured Ester the nanobots had to have been given direction by you. You may not realize it, but you must control them both by subliminal suggestion and direct command. It’s your blood I think the people after you are trying to get. With its DNA enhancements your blood has the ability to change the DNA in whatever body it goes into. It can repair cancer as well as a multitude of other things.”

Both sat and thought about this for a moment. Quinn placed his hand on Red’s. “What were you crying about when Ester found you?” Red sat up straighter in the chair. “At the place I was at when Ester found me.” Gray tears ran down Red’s face. This was the first time Quinn had seen them. It was a small stream of bots that flowed down Red’s cheeks. As they did they simply blended in with the skin there before they reached his chin. A Large picture of a newspaper article appeared on the wall behind Quinn as Red raised his hand to point.

Quinn took the time to read the article and when he turned around he had tears on his face. “Now I see, your wife and daughter. I understand. You know you still have family here in the DC area?” With that Red stood and as

he rose Quinn came off the floor with Red's hand wrapped around his throat. Quinn struggled to move and breathe just as Ester walked into the lab.

"Put him down you big dummy, he is the only one who may be able to keep you alive!" Red turned to look at Ester with a flushed face as Quinn slowly settled back to the floor. "Red, there are a couple of things in your body to disarm before we go back topside. The lab structure protects you from electronic assaults from the outside."

After everything settled down in the lab again Ester is behind Red's chair as Quinn sits in his chair rubbing his throat. "Listen Red, I will take care of you and then we will discuss family. This must be done just in case something happens." Red squirmed around in his chair. "What do you mean something might happen? You said we are secure here."

"We are for the moment Red, but that can change. So, can I help protect you or what? We need to get this done now."

Ester came around and sat on the arm of the large chair and looked at Red. "Honey, let Quinn do this so you are safe, I trust him. He is family like you. You know we consider you family, right?"

Red pounded his fist on the other chair arm and shook the floor around them. "OK, let's get this done."

Quinn scooted his chair closer to Red. "There are two things we need to take care of. The first is that there is a small dose of Bio-Toxin under a cover plate that gives access to your reactor. The second problem is with the reactor. I will need to re-write small portions of the program so that the next time you are above ground they can't arm and overload your reactor."

Red smiled that little smile of his. "That much is already taken care of. Years ago, one of the directors tried the over-load program out on me. He was very pissed that it didn't work. I guess as a matter of self-preservation the nanobots re-engineered the link between the reactor controls and the so-called fail-safe switch. It no longer exists. The Bio-Toxin I knew nothing about."

Quinn shook his head. "So you can do that, you can communicate with the nanobots?" With that Red laid his hand flat on the chair arm. He looked at Quinn. "I did not know what was taking place, but yes. I guess I can. Watch this. Hand with skin." With that the large hand turned dark grey at first. In a

few more seconds the hand now had a complete covering of skin. Complete with wrinkles, moles and the standard imperfections that normal human skin has. “Skin yellow, skin black, skin dark brown.” The skin changed on queue with the verbal command as quickly as it was spoken. Quinn reached over and touched Red’s hand. “It’s warm and slightly clammy and feels like the real thing.”

“It is the real thing and yes guess I can talk to them. Not in the way you might think but we can converse just the same. I constantly review ongoing logs and maintenance charts generated by the bots. I have had this ability since the infusion. I think that this feature was incorporated into their design. They will even protect me to a smaller extent. Reach over and pinch the skin on my hand Quinn.”

With that Quinn did as instructed. When he reached a certain point in the pinch he jerked his hand back with a small yelp. He had a small blister on the tip of his forefinger and thumb. “Wow that hurt. Chemical or electrical?

Red shook his head. “I am not sure. I have only seen this effect on a couple of occasions. The longer you kept you fingers there the greater the burn effect would have been.”

Quinn got up and rolled another small cloth covered table over to the side of Red’s chair. “Now let’s get that Bio-Toxin out of your system and you should be OK when we finally go back up. Can you open the access cover to the reactor port?” With that Red leaned back in the chair a slight bit and a small cover opened just under his left breast.

“Yeah, there it is, see the small glass looking ampule with the blue looking liquid in it? That is what we are after.” Just as Quinn reached into the area with a small set of hemostats the room began to shake. Quinn looked at Ester and Ester at Red. “Well folk’s looks like we ran out of time sooner than we thought.” Quinn worked like a madman to get the small device free and out of Red’s body. All the while wondering how he was going to get everybody out of the lab and to safety.

Red just sat in the chair clinching his jaw and thinking about the next altercation to come. He also hoped that they would reach a point when Quinn and Ester could tell him about his living family. Whoever this was above them was going to pay for making him wait…

Quinn handed the small ampule to Red. Red rolled it over in his fingers

looking at it with great disdain. He stood and turned to face Quinn and Ester. “You two get in the far corner of the lab and wait for me to return.” When they looked back at Red, he tossed the ampule to Quinn. “Hold on to this, it’s a gift for some special friends of mine.” With that Red’s visor closed and turned to a dark black color. He leaped up and disappeared through the ceiling as if he had dove into a pool.

Ester looked up at Quinn. “Do you think we will ever be able to tell him that you are made from his genetic material?” Quinn pulled Ester close into a very warm embrace. “Grandma, I am not so sure about that. I guess it depends on what the future brings.”

V - Battle/Creator

As Red came to rest on the concrete floor of the warehouse, he had already cloaked himself. He looked around. Not many people are in the warehouse. There was a robot off to his right running a vertical tunnel boring machine on the access hatch for the elevator they had used to get to the lab below.

Just then the roof lifted off the structure. He heard the sound of a Heavy Industrial Materials Mover outside. As it accelerated away, so did the roof. Huge crashes were heard all around the building as several turbine powered terra scrapers pushed the walls of the building down. Red took a small step back and ran into something. He turned to see a small area cordoned off for human traffic. There was a 100 foot length of tungsten chain attached to 8 bollards.

Red walked over to the first bollard and twisted the chain off and walked around the perimeter of the enclosure pulling the other bollards out of the concrete as he went. He then walked towards the tunnel bore operator who was watching all this material manipulate itself and seeming to move across the floor in his direction. Red struck the operator in the head with the bollard in his hand and then beat the bore machine into a pile of worthless scrap metal.

By this time all the walls of the building were down and the enemy was now visible and on the move in Reds direction. Red grabbed the last bollard in the chain and threw it away from himself towards the approaching menace. He wrapped the end of the chain in his hand and with a single pull started the

100-foot-long metal menagerie spinning in the air over his head. As he walked forward he was struck many times with rail gun rounds, but his Nano's seemed to have a war protocol in their programing and every wound was quickly repaired. On his walk forward men, robots and cyborgs as well as small battle craft were disassembled. Because of the way the bollards tumbled on their flight the warriors being struck never knew where the strike was coming from. Some lost their heads; others were torn in half as many lost their legs. None survived.

When the imminent danger had been dealt with Red spun the chain once more and cut a small battle craft in half. The small ship and the chain came to rest on the ground as the ship burst into flames.

Red uncloaked and walked up to the large battle cruiser hovering before him. The view ports on the ship were open. Red walked up to smack his hand on the front of the ship to get their attention and as he did the ship moved back a slight bit. As Red stopped the rotation of his arm he noticed that a small chunk of concrete flew up out of the floor. He took several steps back. He smiled for no one as his visor was still dark black in color. He looked at the ship and could tell that they were preparing their weapons for use. He looked back down at the small pock mark in the concrete and then back up at the ship again.

The smile got bigger on his face. Red held his hands about three feet apart and started to concentrate. If there had been anyone left in the area they would have felt the air in the area being sucked out towards Red. He looked down and saw a small ball of air starting to swirl between his hands. The more he concentrated the more the air swirled and the denser it became. When he could no longer see through the air ball he stood erect facing the ship.

Red noticed the exterior grids of the plasma cannon on the ship start to glow and knew they were ready to fire. Red threw the air ball at the nose of the ship with all his strength. The ship never moved or shuddered in the least. Red was looking at a hole through the entirety of the ship at least four feet in diameter. The ship simply fell straight to the ground and caught fire.

Red took one more look around to eliminate any living combatants left and walked towards the entrance to the lab. By god it was time to find out about family and get out of here and come up with some sort of plan. He and his two new friends had little time to use wisely.

“Do you need me? I am here

You cannot see me, yet I am the light you see by

You cannot hear me, yet I speak through your voice

I am the love that you cling too

I am your assurance

I am your peace

I am one with you”

I am the Creator

As Red punched through the concrete to grasp a steel beam to pull the elevator up he remembered these words. He had carved them into the side of a large red rock at his waiting station on Mars. He assumed that they came from his creator. He had never been able to resolve the conflict in his programing with the God issue. From all the things he had seen as an assassin he had a tough time justifying his belief in God. Since all the human emotion had started to surface he had begun to re-evaluate these beliefs. He guessed that these words could have come from either creator.

Red turned upon hearing a loud thumping sound just behind him. Ester climbed up out of a small hatch opening with Quinn behind her assisting her in the climb. Ester grabbed Red and hugged him as Quinn grabbed the end of a cord tied to his belt and pulled up a good-sized medical bag. “I will take that ampule now Quinn. I have a meeting to attend and deliver a gift to a few of my best friends.”

Quinn reached into his coat pocket and tossed the ampule to Red. “I would hate to be in a room when this is let loose. I did a quick analogy of this stuff when you came up here. Kind of works like spider venom. First it stuns the prey and then putrefies the flesh and then the flesh sloughs off the bone. Funny thing is, unlike a spider bite this all happens in about 3 minutes or less.”

Red looked at the pair. “Do you have a place to hide until I can come and get you?”
Quinn pulled Ester close. “Yeah, I will give you a radio frequency in the low bands. Call us on this scrambled or encoded if you can. It can also act as a homing signal for you to get to us.” Red shook his head in understanding.

“When I see you two again this family issue will be dealt with then. I have to know what I am up against and how we can proceed from here.”

With the radio frequency locked into his memory Red turned and jogged off at a brisk pace. Ester looked at Quinn. “Why does he do that when he can fly?” Quinn shook his head as he grabbed her hand and started walking towards their shelter/hideout. “Grandma I guess because they never told him that he could.”

As Red jogged along, he thought about the air ball thing and practiced it several times along the way. He could punch holes through anything he tried it on from the size of his finger to who knew how big. He guessed he could make a hole as big as his ability would allow and hoped he would never have to find out.

Red came to a stop at a small non-descript little dwelling on K Street. He had been here several times and knew that this was the headquarters and staging area for a multitude of black-op and covert agencies he had done work for. He also knew all the people he was interested in seeing would be here. Looking for him.

He reappeared two blocks down the street at the agencies munitions and explosive ordinance depot. He walked through the wall after he had disarmed all of the alarms and took stock of the room’s contents. He saw what he was looking for. It was a small hand held device that was used to explode and atomize its contents in a small confined space. He had used them before to take out his mark and they worked well. He loaded the contents of the ampule into the device and disappeared.

Two blocks back down the street he reappeared just outside of the house on K Street and cloaked himself. He walked through the front door and into the command room of the facility. He looked around to ensure that everyone he was looking for was there. He smiled when all were present and accounted for. He armed the device and sat it on the main conference table and uncloaked himself. As the people in the room all froze at his appearance, he rolled his visor back. He looked directly at the Facility Commander and said.

“You can consider this as my resignation.”

With that he backed through the wall and the device exploded as he watched. Quinn had been wrong. It may take three minutes for someone like him. Everyone in the room he was watching was dead or dying before he was all the way through the wall.

Red turned and jogged away and never once looked back over his shoulder. He was about to send a transmission to Quinn as a large battle cruiser floated around the corner no less than ten feet in front of him…

“This is Commander Brighton of the Battle Cruiser Eclipse. You will not move you will not act against us. **YOU WILL BEHAVE, YOU WILL NOT MAKE AN EFFORT TO HARM THIS VESSEL OR IT” S PASSENGERS. IF YOU DO I WILL DISIMATE YOUR ASS. YOU BIG CHUNK OF SCRAP METAL!”** Red just chuckled…

With that the cruiser landed softly and the gangplank dropped to the ground. A large man in uniform exited the ship and turned very staunchly and walked towards Red.

“Close enough, you can talk from there. What do you want?" The commander stood there staring and sizing Red up.

Red palmed his baton as it ejected into his hand from the side of his thigh. “You are either very stupid or very confident born of that same stupidity. What do you want? Here to take me in I suppose. Well, you are too short handed, nor do you have enough fire power to make that happen.”

The Commander paled a slight bit even though he tried not to show any fear or apprehension. “You are Red?”

“Yes, I am Red. Now last time. What do you want?”

The Commander dipped his head again. He had never felt this way in the presence of an enemy. He could feel the sweat roll down under his arms and off his forehead. “Red, I would like to talk to you for a few moments. I think we have a common interest.”

Red looked around and saw an abandoned bank and motioned with his head for the Commander to walk that way. When they were inside Red stowed his

baton as he walked over to the vault door and pulled it open. Again the Commander walked inside at the insistence of a head nod. Once they were inside Red pulled the door closed. As he rolled his visor back, he lit several lights to illuminate the room. “Let’s make this quick Commander. I have ground to cover.”

The Commander shook his head. “Red, I am part of a small group of Military and Black-Ops agents who are after the same thing you are after. We want all of this death and abuse of our citizenry to stop and try to reform the current government to help lead the people again.”

Red Nodded. “What do you want from me?”

“Red, there have been times when I could have used your intelligence and you as a force multiplier to help change this unbelievably bad situation. We want your help if you are interested. Together we can change the world if you will.”

Red smiled and the Commander took two quick steps back. “Commander, I do not know you nor trust you. Give me a way to contact you and in the future if what you say proves itself out. I may be willing to help. However, I do have several things I have to take care of first before I can offer any aid. By the way Commander, if you ever threaten me or point arms at me again, I will wipe you and your vessel from the face of the earth. There will not be enough left to assume you ever existed.”

Sweat now poured from the Commanders face and his uniform was wet to his waist. “I understand Red. I will have my communications officer send you a message in Morse code. I assume you understand it?"

"Not a problem Commander. Until we meet again.” With that Red disappeared and the Commander was left standing in the dark. He grabbed a small light from his vest and shown it on the vault door. He walked over, pushed it open and headed back to his ship. As he approached the gangplank he noticed a large hand imprint in the side of his ship next to the entry door. “I hope I never make that son of a bitch mad at me or my crew. I am not so sure I could handle that kind of anger.”

Red had already delivered and received a message from Quinn and was in route to their sanctuary. He knew he was headed towards Fort Belvoir, but he did not know exactly where yet. It was time to find out about his family and talk to Quinn and Ester about Commander Brighton. He really wanted to

know their thoughts on this individual and if there were truly others in the current government structure who wanted to change things.

As Red made his way towards Fort Belvoir he had a strange feeling that he was being followed. This was backed up by his on-board radar. There was a small craft in a low hover a quarter mile behind him. It seemed to be moving closer the farther he went along. If only he could fly. He took cover behind the corner of a large building and waited. All of a sudden his radar became scrambled and he was having trouble finding the small craft. He swirled a small ball of air in his right hand in anticipation of an attack.

Just then the small craft zoomed around the corner behind him. As he turned, he felt very peculiar. Almost as if he was vibrating. He had seen this in many of his marks just before he finalized there contract. They called it nerves. They shook and sweated and turned pale. He was just shaking. A voice boomed out of the small craft as he watched. The vibrations grew in strength and intensity.

“RED, DO NOT MOVE. I am using a new weapon we made just for you big boy. What you feel is from an Electro Magnetic Harmonic Pulse Emitter.”

Red shook even harder. The craft in his vision was now just a blur. Somehow, he had maintained the small air ball in his hand. He was now down on one knee and grasping the side of the building for support. The building seemed to be shaking as well.

“Lay face down on the deck with your hands out and do not move. One way or another you are going with me.” The small craft moved closer to Red, and it drew up to less than twenty feet away and landed.

“Well, hello there big man, looks like I just earned myself some extra rations and downtime.”

Red gritted his teeth and looked up at the uniformed warrior. “You will not live long enough to collect on it Cretan. I will see to that.”

The warrior just smiled. “Yeah, this baby is just a prototype and I can’t quite get it adjusted to your frequency but be glad for that. They want you alive. I would have shook your ass to pieces if it were up to me”

Just as the warrior leaned over to place electronic shackles on Red the Harmonic Emitter on the front of his vessel blew apart. Red slumped to the

ground exhausted. He could not move very well and lost control of the small air ball.

The warrior drew his small rail gun and turned to face Quinn. Quinn was holding a full-sized rail rifle and was pointing it at the warrior. Just then a window in the building they were at flew open. The old man inside yelled out at the small group. “What in the name of hades are you people doing out here? I am trying to sleep in here now get outta here.”

As Quinn looked over at the warrior he shot Quinn in the shoulder. Quinn dropped the rifle as he fell backwards. Just as the warrior turned to face Red again everyone heard a loud pop. The warriors face screwed up in the strangest look Red thought. With that the warrior fell forward on his face.

Ester came walking around from behind the small craft with an antique handgun hanging at her side. She smiled as she walked towards the two fallen men. Quinn made it back to his feet as best he could as Red drug himself over to the building wall and leaned back against it. The old man in the building slammed the window shut, locked it and closed the internal cover.

VI – Learning to Fly

“Ester, where did you get that gun. I did not even know they existed anymore.” She smiled at Quinn. “It was a gift from my late husband, he used to collect them. He knew I could never have a rail gun, and he always wanted me to be able to protect myself.”

Red brought himself up on one knee. “Thanks Ester, You just saved us both. Now let’s get out of here. I am sure backup will be here soon.”

Quinn walked over to the small Electro Magnetic Harmonic Pulse Emitter and looked it over quickly. “This is a real problem Red. I did not even know these existed. We have a lot of work to do. Let’s get out of here. I think I hear more warriors on the way.”

Red looked back in the direction of the noise they heard and knew that they would be cutting it close. As he stood erect and walked towards Quinn he

saw a lot of blood on the front of the small craft. He knew the blood was not from the dead warrior.

Red was slow to move and felt as if he had been run over by a large battle cruiser. He walked over to Quinn and picked him up much to Quinn's objection. He paid no attention to Quinn as Ester led the way out of the battle zone, they were just in. He followed Ester who had a rather quick step at the moment. They made their way to the back of the fort to a small block building with one door and no windows. It has several pipes, and a multitude of electrical boxes and conduits all attached to the rear of the building. He wondered to himself if this was just a quick place to hide or another one of Quinn's hideaways.

Ester produced a key unlocked the door and walked in grabbing Red's arm and pulling him in behind. Once inside she opened one of the electrical panels and punched in an access code and flipped one of the breaker switches and the floor started going down. Red smiled to himself as he wondered how many of these places Quinn had around town.

Once they reached the bottom and stepped off the platform the elevator made its return trip back topside. Red walked over to a table and laid Quinn down. Quinn was now fading in and out and Red noticed he had lost a lot of blood from the rail gun wound.

Ester moved a small table over beside the bed and picked up a needle as she looked at Red. "It's up to you now big man. I don't think Quinn has much time so if you are going to do this let's do it now." With that Red's visor rolled back as he leaned over.

Ester stuck the needle into Red's neck and took a syringe full of Red's blood. She then cleaned a small place at the wound opening and injected the full syringe. Red noticed that the nanobots came alive at the entry point as it turned dark grey, and the fresh hole sealed up before their eyes. Red looked at Ester and back at Quinn. Ester walked over to the chair and sat down.

"Red, come over here and sit with me and rest. We have to talk about a couple of things." Red sat down beside her in another of the large chairs like he had used in the other lab location.

"Ester, the nanobots are working on Quinn. How can this be? If they are tuned in to my harmonic signature what is going on here?"

"Red, to put it plain and simple Quinn is your son. You also must be

suggesting that the nanobots do this work. He was created in a lab much like you and my husband used some of your stored genetic material to give birth to Quinn. There are other things about Quinn that neither of us will ever know but for all intent and purpose he is your son."

Red looked at Ester and then at Quinn. "Is he the family that he made mention of earlier?" They noticed Quinn had sat up on the table and was looking at them both.

Red just shook his head. "It seems we have much more to talk about. By the way, Ester. Where do you keep that small pistol of yours at anyway?"

Ester just giggled as she stood up and walked over to Quinn. "Now Red, it would not be proper for a lady such as myself to tell you where I keep that thing." She picked up a large piece of gauze and started to clean up Quinn's wound. It had all but healed and the cleanup was mainly to remove as much of the blood as possible.

Quinn turned to the edge of the table and dropped his legs over and supported himself on Ester a little as he got himself back together. "Do you think I can call you Dad or should we just stick with Red for now?"

The three all came together for a few minutes. Red leaned back in his chair and was thinking about what to do next. "Let's stick with Red for now. You and Ester have a lot to tell me, and we need to get on with it. I need to know all of the details as it will affect how I will handle things in the future. How do you like the nanobots Quinn?"

With that Quinn stood up and seemed to show no ill effects from the wound as he stood. "Not sure yet Red. These things are doing something to me, and I am not so sure I like it."

"Get used to it Son." Red's face beamed with a huge smile. "Right now, they are correcting anything and everything that is wrong with you. Better get used to it."

The three came together to plan their next move. It felt as if a fire had warmed the room as they all looked at each other for the first time in this light.

As they all sat and talked about Quinn being Red’s son and built bonds with each other for the future. Quinn’s wound healed completely. He was a little

slow and needed a good meal and some rest. He would not, however, suffer any long-term ill effects from the wound. It did not appear that he would even have a scar.

He made a note in his journal that his eyesight had improved from what it had been earlier in the day. He thought this odd and just assumed that the nanobots had taken care of this.

Ester made a quick meal for her and Quinn from the stored food goods and as they sat and ate they talked. Ester called an impromptu meeting.” Red, there is more family we need to talk about. When you and your wife and child were so severely injured you were all taken to the trauma center in Crystal City. Your daughter passed away and so did your wife. But not before they took the baby she was carrying and put her away in the pre-mature child ICU. Your wife was only in the beginning of her second trimester.”

Red sat and stared at Ester. “So, we had another daughter? I knew there was something going on from the way my wife had been acting.”

Ester smiled at Red. “It seems you have several grandkids scattered around out on the west coast. There is one in particular we need to go and see. He is your youngest great grandson. He has terminal pancreatic cancer.”

With that Red stood. “Well then we need to get out west and now!” Ester stood and tried to wrap her arms around Red the best she could. “Red, we have a lot of planning to do before that can happen. You are wanted and I would assume me and Quinn are too.”
Red sat back down, and the planning process began. After several hours of conversation, they settled on a plan. Quinn looked over at Red and with a puzzled look on his face he asked. “Red, when you were on your way here why didn’t you just fly here?”
Red had an even more puzzled look on his face. “What do you mean? I cannot fly. You have seen the extent of my air travel in the other lab earlier today.”

Quinn looked at Ester and then back to Red. “Red, that same power in your mind you use to levitate and move yourself from place to place and through walls and floors also gives you the power to fly as well. I guess they never told you, but you can fly. You can fly here in the earth’s atmosphere as well as in space and even through water. The water thing is not exactly flying but I think you get my point.”

Red studied Quinn's face a moment. 'I can fly. I can fly! This changes things. I am leaving for the west now. You two can catch up with me later."

Ester looked at Red. "So, you just gonna leave us here unprotected. We could use your help to get to the west coast and in the long run it will be safer for us to travel in a group. That way we can continue to fill you in on all the things you don't know, and you can keep me and Quinn safe at the same time."

Red looked at the two of them with somewhat of a defeated look on his face. Ester took his hand. "Now Red, that little sad puppy dog look isn't gonna help you any. My oh my. You are starting to learn how to use those newfound emotions aren't you?" Ester just laughed.

With their plan changes made and most of the things packed and ready for the trip Quinn and Ester settled in to rest for a while. Red just sat going over all of the material he had stored on his wife and daughter. Small grey trails ran down his face as the other two slept. Red smiled at one thing. When they left this place, he was going to put his newfound flight skills to the test. He was also going to see that daughter of his.

They had finally concluded their planning session, gathered their supplies and headed back topside. Quinn had managed to acquire a medium-sized cruiser and he and Ester were packing it up. Red noted that the cruiser was comparable to what he would have known as an SUV in his driving days of the past. The major differences were that is was motivated by magnetic pulse and guided by magnets in the ground on all the current road surfaces. You could drive it, or it could drive itself. This one could haul a lot of material for a family of five or six and was made for longer trips.

Red was hiding in the small copse of trees next to the block building. Ester could tell he was elated with the news of family and almost childlike in his new knowledge of his ability to fly.

When they were packed and ready to go Quinn looked over at Red. "Ok Red, time to give this flying thing a try. Just think about how you moved the small distances and apply that on a larger scale. As soon as you are comfortable with flying we need to get a move on. I have a signal jammer and blocker working in this area, but they will catch up to us soon."

Red looked at the pair with the largest smile on his face. "So Quinn, Superman style or the Silver Surfer style of flying?"

Quinn looked at Ester. “Superman? What’s he talking about?”

Ester just laughed. “Superman honey. I think you kind of look like him a little. We gotta work on getting you a head full of hair though.”

Red looked over at Ester and winked. He leapt up into the air and flew straight ahead into the copse of trees. Quinn and Ester heard a loud crashing sound and saw several of the small trees hit the ground. Red stumbling out of the wooded area shaking his head. “I don’t think Superman did it that way.” Quinn and Ester were both laughing out loud. Ester could have sworn that Red’s face turned red.

Ester and Quinn both laughed so hard they cried. Red jumped up into the air again. He crashed several more times but in a few minutes he was getting the hang of it. It seemed his biggest problem was stopping. In his mind he would just stop the thought process for flying and tumble straight to the ground. He talked to Quinn for a few minutes and got some pointers and soon enough was flying fairly well.

“Chuck Yeager I am not, but I think I can make it where we are going. You folks ready to go?” They all came together for a few minutes and then Quinn and Ester hopped into the cruiser and headed out. Red cloaked himself and leapt into the air and was soon following along behind the cruiser at a comfortable pace.

As they made time west. They all wondered how this was going to turn out. Red thought to himself it was nice to be starting on an adventure for himself instead of heading off to terminate another mark. He thought he felt his chest flutter a little at that thought and he smiled for no one to see as he looked forward to being part of a family again.

VII – Friends/Enemies

National Command Headquarters for the Ministry of Defense and Covert Operations

The Commander sat at the head of the large oval table reviewing reports as the rest of his staff filed into the room for the afternoon briefing. He looked out over his glasses to make sure all of the slackers showed up.

“Let’s get seated and get this show on the road folks. I would like to make it home tonight before midnight.”

Everyone rushed in as if playing a game of musical chairs to get seated and ready for the briefing. They knew if they did not. There would be big trouble.

The Commander looked at the opposite end of the table. “Staff Sargent, update please.”
The large man cleared his throat and looked around the room. “Commander, we have our mole in place, and she is in constant contact with Red. She will continue to monitor his whereabouts and give location reports, and any other pertinent data needed as it becomes available.”

The Commander looked him over as well as the report he had just been handed. “Is that all Sargent? It is to my understanding we have a new problem. One that may be a very large issue.”

The Sargent started too visibly sweat and fidget around. “Commander, the CIA Dispatch group has sent out three of their Rouge Black Ops Agents to terminate Red. We have no idea where these agents are and since they are Rouge. We have no way of tracking them.”

The Commander stood and leaned across the table. The Sargent flinched even though the Commander was over eight feet away from him. “Sargent, if we lose Red. If he gets terminated or anything happens to any of our other operatives. I will have you skinned, and that skin hung in my trophy room. Do You Understand Me?”

“Yes Commander. I am on it.”

The meeting broke up and everyone left the room in a hurry.

The Commander sat at the table and wondered how he was going to explain this to his superior much less his wife. He shivered and knew he would not make it home in time for dinner. Much less midnight.

~

Gunnery Sargent Karl Stafford stood over his mission bag to find what else he might need to finish the job. He had sorted several small arms and a shoulder slung rifle and scabbard ready to go. He needed the additional items required to make him as stealthy as possible. He was outward bound to kill or as they called it decommission an HSK.

He smiled at the thought. He knew if he were successful, it would mean a great promotion and a pay raise. He would have a hell of a rep in the Marines as well as in the very grey Merc market to boot. He intended to retire to this market.

Taking down an HSK was no small task. The added benefit for Karl was he knew this HSK. He had worked as back up on a mission with this one and he hated him. Such arrogant snobs they were.

He walked over to the diagnostics platform hanging on the wall and plugged in. He wanted to make sure all his cybernetic systems were working at peak efficiency. The Marines had made him a bit stronger and faster but due to a genetic defect could not make him any smarter. He had on his own passed all the required intelligence tests and had been granted these abilities he had enjoyed so much. Nothing like killing a man who simply cannot beat you. The HSK was a different story, however.

As a small trickle of blood ran from under his thumb nail he looked down. When he saw this, he knew how much he wanted it. More of a personal matter for him than anything. He released his grasp of the cable end when the small clicking sound indicated that the test process was over. As the cable dropped from his hand a small drop of blood hit the floor.

He returned to the bag and stuffed in the other items he had long considered. He was now ready. As he stood by the bag a small screen next to the door lit up. He knew the face that appeared. His ride was here. He slung on a jacket and then slung on the rifle as he picked up the rest of his gear. The door to his domicile slid open as he walked through and headed towards the stairs. Elevators were for grunts and civilians.

As he walked out of the front of the building he knew there was a small craft

hovering there. It was in stealth mode. He had seen enough in active duty to detect the faint little shimmer. A door opened on the side. He smiled as he stepped up into the craft. It was exactly what he had asked for. It had flown over unmanned and was armed to the point that he knew it was hanging low from the load. “When hunting Bear, one does not take the rabbit rifle” He had heard these many times from father. He came from a long line of trackers and hunters.

He did not know what it really meant as he had never seen a rabbit or a bear. He only knew it meant taking the biggest and best gun for the job. The one thing his Pop had also always said was “Never shoot a Large Caliber man with a small Caliber bullet.” He never did. He closed the door and racked all his gear. He then headed the craft towards the last known coordinates of his target.

As he sat back in the seat he felt warm and confident in his abilities. He also felt that ever present shivering down his spine. Like walking through a door with an armed man on the other side. “Check Red, your move!”

Ester lay in the back of the vehicle resting as Quinn navigated west. They were headed for West Virginia to a safe house and Quinn knew the location. Ester allowed Quinn to get into the trip. She dug around in her bag and grabbed a small handheld device. She flipped a switch on the side to shut off any noise the device might make.

She punched in the contact info for the Commander and sent a short message:

Headed SW for safe house in WV.

Red is safe as well as Quinn.

Several problems to clean up left behind.

I will forward the coordinates for those issues.

Will send more info as time affords.

Help keep us safe as much as you can.

She smiled a little as she lay back in the seat. Her eyes picked up as she noted a new inbound message:

Much danger ahead.

Three black ops sent by CIA Dispatch Group.

We cannot track operatives.

Cannot provide support at this time.

Eclipse will be in range in 6 hours.

Watch your backs.

She frowned and started working her way towards Quinn in the front. She did not notice that Red had just been outside the window observing her during the message transfer. As she took the seat next to Quinn she looked over at him with that look on her face. When Quinn finally looked up, he smirked at Ester. “What is it now? My piloting skills not suiting you?”

“Quinn, you are doing fine. After everything that has happened. I just have that feeling. You know, like someone or something is after us. I hope you are keeping an eye on things.”

Quinn looked back down at the charts he had been reviewing. “I am doing the best I can. I have visual contact on all sides of the cruiser and Red is flying over watch. I think we are about as safe as we can be.”

Red was at about three hundred feet just above and behind the large cruiser. He was rather enjoying this new skill and was taking advantage of the view. He thought he noticed movement just behind the cruiser when he noticed a small pulse of energy emitted from seemingly nowhere and struck the back of the cruiser. It started to slow, and he noticed the weird shimmering effect he knew to be a cloaked battle craft. Red dropped down to the top of the strange looking sight and sure enough there it was. The small battle cruiser had slowed it pace to match the vehicle in front. Red uncloaked as he sat in the seat next to the operator.

“Stafford, I should have known it was you.” His untimely welcome was met with a small rail gun round to the side of his chest. He then took two more to the side of the head. Boy was this scumbag fast. He must have been modified. By then Karl was in the back of the craft grabbing his gear. The side door of the craft opened and he lept out. As he exited the craft he flung

and small IED just under the craft and it exploded. It exploded in an exceptionally large way.

As the small mushroom shaped cloud rose in the sky Karl had sought refuge behind a large concrete retaining wall along the side of the travel corridor. He noted that the other cruiser had made it up the path enough to escape the brunt of the damage caused by the large explosion.

Red was now a thousand feet above the whole mess. He waited as the bots finished his repairs. He was cloaked all but from the knees down and that was cloaking as he watched. He grabbed the baton as it ejected from it resting place and slowly started the trip down.

He touched the ground just behind Karl and struck him in the center of the back with the baton. Karl went down and rolled over shooting the rail gun as fast as he could pull the trigger. Thanking the inventor of the vest he wore. He scrambled to his feet still trying to catch his breath. He made a mad dash to the woods as Red stood with six of the rail gun projectiles protruding from his chest.

Quinn arrived just as the last of the rounds fell to the ground and the small round grey holes sealed themselves up. “Red, you OK!”

“Yeah, just need a moment here. We need to talk to Ester NOW. I think she might have some knowledge of this.”

Quinn stood there shaking his head. “No way, how could she have known?”

“I will fill you in on the details when we get to Ester. Is the cruiser still running?

~

“Brighton, for God’s sake are you with them yet?” The Commanders voice boomed. By the way, the package for Red has been delivered to our secure Colorado facility. He needs to get there as soon as possible. The package has a very short shelf life.”

Commander Brighton sat up straight in his command chair as the message

transmission bellowed out into the bridge of his battle cruiser.

“Well I see you haven’t forgotten about us. I am less than 150 miles from them and will make contact shortly. Affirmative on the package delivery. Any special instructions for handling Red once we get him to Colorado?”

Silence from the other end. “That’s strange, comms officer what’s the issue with that last message?”

The young woman looked up from the console she was working at. “No Sir, I have no idea. It’s just as if the signal disappeared.”

Brighton scratched his chin for a moment. “Helmsman, how long till we get to the target?”

“Twelve minutes Sir. And closing fast.” Brighton looked up. “Give me visuals and cloak us so we can enter the area unseen. I also want an armed escort party ready to go and scan the immediate area using everything we have. I want to know beyond a shadow of a doubt who else is in the area. I don’t want any surprise’s people. I am understood?”

A unanimous “Aye, Aye Sir” rang from the crew as they approached their target. The large battle cruiser pulled up just behind the stopped threesome on the travel way and uncloaked.

A ramp dropped to the ground as twelve large armed men surrounded the three. “Brighton, what are you doing here?” Red easily saw the man over the soldiers as he acknowledged his presence.

“You folks need a ride? Looks like you are having a little trouble.”

“Why would we want any help from you Commander? We will be leaving shortly.”

“Red, we have your grandson at one of our facilities in Colorado and he has less than 72 hours to live. Now do you want to keep breaking my balls or do you want my help?”

Red looked at Ester and Quinn. They both looked at him. “We will take your help Commander. I need a quiet place to have a private conversation with my friends. I hope you can accommodate us.”

“Let’s all get boarded. I have taken care of you. We need to move now. The area is clear, and I want to make way while we are still safe.”

Commander Brighton was the last to board. He wanted to make sure his charges were safe. This would be without a doubt the quickest trip he would ever make to Colorado.

Karl naked from the waist up lay in an ice-cold stream three miles from the explosion site. He was trying to get the swelling to go down in his back a bit before he made another attempt on his contract. The baton strike to his spine had almost been fatal. Had he not been wearing his vest he would have died where he stood when Red struck him.

“I am going to make that miserable SOB pay in the worst way when I catch up to him.” As he whispered this softly to himself as he lay in the water.

“You gonna make who pay sucker?” Karl lifted the gun up out of the water and pointed it towards the voice. “Make yourself known or dead. I don’t care which.”

“Now, now, you gonna hurt someone here to help you big ugly good for nothing…” The large man stepped out of the brush and dropped a large bag on the ground. He walked over and sat on a tree stump next to Karl.

“What’s up brother?” Karl smiled a crooked smile as he got up out of the water. He grabbed a towel off his bag and as he dried himself off, he sat on the rocky soil next to his friend. “They sending out Lieutenant’s on jobs now? I heard you bought it in China.”

“Now Karl, you really think they gonna get rid of me that easily? Besides, who else would be out here saving you dumbass?”

They both laughed out loud. They sat and chatted for several more minutes and as Karl stood and leaned over to pick up his bag, he put the barrel of his gun just behind the Lieutenant’s head and pulled the trigger three quick times.

“Sorry Lieutenant Hammond. This is my contract; you will have nothing to do with this.”

Karl shouldered his bag and grabbed the Lieutenant’s bag and headed off into the brush. His next mission was to get new transportation and locate his

mark to finish this off. He disappeared into the brush as his friend slid off the stump into the small icy cold stream. Karl never looked back as he forged ahead in pursuit of his mission.

~

Ester sat at the briefing table with her head in her hands trying not to look at anyone. Beside her sat Quinn, Red and Commander Brighton. “Commander, I am not sure why you are here and would request that you leave while I discuss several issues with my family.”

The Commander sat up straight in his chair and with a frown on his face he looked Red in the eyes as he spoke. “Red, I am here to back up Ester and to let you know she works for us. She has been in deep cover for over 40 years, and we know everything she has done or said. She is not the enemy.”

Red scooted back on the small stout table from the ships machine shop that had been brought in for him to sit on. It was the only thing they could find that would support his weight. “So, she is not responsible for us almost getting killed back there. Is that what you are trying to say?”

The Commander reached over and softly grabbed Ester’s shoulder as he spoke. “That is exactly what I am trying to say. There were three rogue agents sent to assassinate you and that was the cause of your trouble.”

Red looked around the table at everyone there. He shook his head as he paused at Ester. Are there any more secrets or anything else anyone here needs to tell me about? I need to know now as I may not be so forgiving in future events.”

Ester looked up with tears in her eyes. She reached over a grabbed one of Red’s hands. “No honey, I love you very much and I could not tell you what I knew nor what I was doing. I am only here to help if you will allow me too.”

Red gently laid his other hand on top of hers. “Ester, I care for you as well. Just do not keep me in the dark anymore. I have lived most of my life that way and it has to stop.”
Ester stood and walked over to Red and as best she could she wrapped her arms around his thick neck. The tears ran down her face and onto Red’s shoulder where they grew smaller as they disappeared.

“So Commander, how long until we get to this place in Colorado? I understand I am urgently needed there.”

The Commander looked up at the countdown clock on the wall. “One hour and fifteen minutes. They will be waiting for you in the docking bay when we get there.”

~

Karl pulled the driver out of the seat of the commercial transport and threw him to the ground. He had made contact with his inside source and was getting ready to head to Colorado. His back hurt as he climbed back up into the transport to stow his gear.

Driven by hate, rage and anger he wanted Red in the worst way. He hoped he did not have to deal with another assassin before he could complete his task. He smiled at the thought of watching Red die. He also relished the idea of killing anyone else with Red when the time came.

The large commercial transport lumbered out of the rest stop and headed west as hard as it would go…

VIII - Colorado

The large Battle Cruiser was cloaked and hung in the air at about 7500 feet. It was pointed at Uncompahgre Mountain. It was one of five 14,000-foot peaks that surrounded the small town of Lake City Colorado. The other four Sunshine, Redcloud, Handies and Wetterhorn all stood in silence as did the little town. It had been founded in 1875 for the mining boom and had dwindled to less than 300 people in its ice-cold clutches since then.

A large outcropping of rock slid to one side as the Battle Cruiser uncloaked

and moved forward inside the mountain. As the docking clamps engaged the cruiser the boarding ramp lowered. Several people disembarked as Red appeared next to the gurney the small child was laying on.

He marveled at this small boy who is his grandson. Quinn, Ester and the Commander appeared beside Red as the Doctor in charge began to speak. “My name is Doctor Cook, but you folks can call me Thad. We do not have much time.”

Red sat back on one of the docking knuckles as Quinn grabbed the needle off the tray Thad has pushed over. Red’s visor rolled back as Quinn stuck the needle in his neck. He walked over to the child to inject the liquid within. “Hold on there, what are you doing? Don’t we need to…?” Red grabbed his arm and pulled him into a sitting position next to him.

“The only thing we need to do now Thad is wait. The boy will come around shortly. Until then the only thing I want from you is hourly reports on his status.”

They all followed the corpsman pushing the gurney into a hallway and out of sight as Thad sat on the docking bay floor more than a little confused.

Quinn and Ester were in the room with the little boy as Red and the Commander stood outside looking in through a large glass window. “Commander, do we have any Intel on that piece of garbage Karl that tried to kill us.”

“I don’t have anything on him yet. But from his actions I think we may know who this is. His is one nasty relentless bastard that will not give up unless one of the two of you is dead. If you come to the comms center with me, I will dig up his jacket and we can have a look.”

Red looked hard at the commander which caused him to take a small step back. “I can assure you it will be him that dies. In the worst possible way. I have plans for him.”

With that they headed off down the hallway. Just before Red turned to go, he looked over at Ester and she gave him a nod. He knew she would keep him apprised of any changes in the young man’s condition.

~

The large commercial transport pulled into the rest area in Gunnison Colorado and came to a stop. It had been guided off here due to a large stretch of road that was down between Lake City and Gunnison due to an avalanche. Karl knew he was getting close. He could feel it. His time for payback was upon him.

~

“Gunnery Sargent Karl Stafford, here is his data Red. Does this old picture favor who you were fighting?”

“Yeah, that’s him.” Both sat and reviewed the data on the screen.

“Red, I know something about this man that you do not know. I just noticed it in the document related to his upgrades. He has a small tracking chip embedded in his right forearm that they used to monitor his movements. They used this chip for his training to help with improved movements and speed and agility. On the last line of the report is the chip data. It is small and only transmits at close range.”

Red reviewed the chip data and locked it into his scanner for future use. The pair walked back down the hall to see why Dr. Thad had not yet reported on the status of the child.

They found Thad, Quinn and Ester standing around the bed. The bed back had been raised, and the child was sitting up. Red disappeared and reappeared next to the bed. Without hesitation the little boy laughed out loud and jumped up and into Red’s arms.

“Grandpa Red, you made it. They told me you were coming.”

Red looked dumbfounded, not only at the little boys actions but at his recognition as well. “Look Grandpa, mom gave me pictures of you. Grandpa one from before, one from after.” With that the little boy produced two

pictures from the pocket in his pajama top. Red stared at the pictures of himself. He could not take his eyes off the before picture until the little boy wrapped his arms around Red's neck.

Two streams of tears rolled down Red's face as they disappeared into his neck below the visor.

Red held the little boy up in front of his face and though his voice almost sounded choked he managed to get out a sentence. "Well now little man, you have me at a disadvantage. You know my name, but I don't know yours."

The little boy looked up with the same blue eyes he was staring into. "My name is Gregory, but you can call me Greg. I love you Grandpa." Again, as Red pulled the little boy into himself he cried as he whispered into the little boy's ear. "I love you too Greg."

The stayed wrapped up in each other's arms for what seemed like an eternity to Red. He did not want to let go. Quinn and Ester walked over and joined in on the group hug. Red felt warm, not that heat kind of warmth. But that glorious warmth you get from contact. Human contact.

He felt the centuries of cold he had endured on the surface of mars melt away. He could not remember feeling this warm, ever…

A large man in a filthy Carhart jumpsuit stood on a berm of snow overlooking a transit rest area in Gunnison Colorado. He had observed the movements of the man in the commercial transport for several hours. He knew the man was getting restless and this would be his undoing.

Red and Greg sat in the large hallway together for hours talking, playing and nuzzling each other as if they were a proud papa dog with his new pup. Red could tell that as time went on that afternoon that Greg was feeling better. He knew that the nanobots were doing their job. Not known by anyone other than Red and he supposed the Creator. His nanobots could be programmed to be mission specific. Red could have them heal you or kill you. It was his choice. His nanobots seemed to have what Red felt like was a fond affection for him.

Sometimes when he was in harm's way they seemed to understand this and go on the offensive. In many ways, he was healed or reinforced quickly in battle. The Nano's would also attack an individual at times even without

Reds consent. They communicated in simple machine language which of course Red did telepathically.

They flowed through the veins and arteries he had left and had constructed their own pipeline of sorts through the rest of Reds structure. In a microsecond they would be on the scene of whatever Red needed. Red had even set up a schedule for the Nano's for upgrades and improvements he wanted done when he was either not very busy or was down in what Red called self-maintenance.

Greg's eyes sparkled, and all of his test results came back negative. Red had noticed improvements in his strength, agility, sense of smell and vision. Greg would have a long life and a good future. What Red also knew was that Greg harbored the future for humankind. The nanobots now in his system would be at Greg's complete disposal. Greg would understand as he got older that he too had complete control over the nanobots he had in his system. Red felt much better knowing that if he died or was killed. There was still hope. Hope for the future and most of humankind.

Commander Brighton was on station just around the corner in that hallway keeping guard with three other marines and he had another contingency down the hallway out of sight watching the other end of the hallway. He was gonna make damn sure Red and Greg were not messed with. He had grown to like Red and would protect him at all costs. He also had long range scanners on the lookout for the chip signature in Karl's arm and would know if he were anywhere close. Little did he know as he smiled at the pair when he peaked around the corner how much things were going to change. What was really gonna piss him off was how fast it was going to change and who was going to be effected.

The large man in the filthy Carharts sloughed down off the top of the berm and got into the large transport. He ate a good meal and changed into suitable clothes for the next portion of his mission. His Security Officer/MP uniform would serve him well at the facility in Lake City. He checked all of the ID cards and papers to be sure there would be no trouble getting in. Getting in to complete his mission.

Karl was sitting in the large commercial transport when he was notified that the avalanche had been cleared and the roads to Lake City were open again. He could have been a poster child for Pavlov's dogs. He actually had to wipe the drool from the corner of his mouth. It was almost killing time. He looked over at the small package that had been delivered to him during his down

time. He smiled and pushed the transport as hard as it would

Sargent Kenneth Muldoon pulled into Lake City in the small battle cruiser. He moved into a formation and anchored it in place at the entrance to the mountain facility. He had halfway expected Karl to have crashed his commercial transport through the fence and be in the process of starting a small war when he arrived.

He was met immediately upon exiting his vehicle. His papers we examined, and he was led to a gate in front of a massive door. The gate guard again examined his paperwork and scanned his security badge. He passed through the gate and led to the huge door. It is going to be hard to exit this place once he was finished.

The door opened slowly with such force in its moving that it almost seemed to push the air out of the way and suck him into the growing void between the doors edge and massive frame.

Once inside after the quick elevator ride to the top he was lead to his sleeping quarters and he stowed his gear. He was then lead to his new commanders office for a briefing on his new responsibilities. After the meeting he had the rest of the afternoon to check out the areas of the facility he had access to and he had also planned to check out a few he did not.

His first mission was to find out where all of the cameras were at and where any other detection devices may be installed. He wanted to be out of this place and possibly be back home in time for breakfast if possible.

Dr. Thad stood in front of the small secure bio storage unit. He had taken samples of Greg's blood and some small tissue samples as well. His people would be proud. He may someday help in saving millions of people. He wondered how far this little subversive act would carry him into the future...

Karl had left the large commercial transport in a parking lot and headed around the mountain far enough to be out of line of sight from the gate. He had a map showing the weakest security areas on the mountain side and he had a route planned.

He had taken the contents of his package with him. It was heavy but worth the haul. It was a device similar to a rifle and called a piton gun. It would shoot a reinforced cable with a piton on the end from 10 meters to 250

meters. Simply clip your harness to the piton, unclip the cable and install a new piton. Fire to the next position and move on. He had made good progress and had only fallen twice. Both times he had been lucky enough to fall back into snow and not onto ice.

He was now on a small ledge next to a large rock formation which was one of the entrances for the large battle cruisers that went in and out of this place. He had made it this far and had yet to be fired on. He was thinking maybe he had a little inside help.

He placed high explosive charges at several places linking them together as he went. He moved back around the far side of the ledge to a safe position and removed the detonator from his bag. He tied the wires off and placed his thumb on the actuator.

Red stood holding Greg. Next to him were Commander Brighton and Thad. Walking down the hall to meet them were Ester and Quinn. Ester walked over to Red and tried to remove Greg from his arms. She saw that this was not gonna happen and stood back in the circle.

Red looked at the Commander. “What is our next course of action?”

The Commander tickled Greg under his chin as he looked up at Red. “We are gonna get you and Greg back to USAMRIID at Fort Detrick where this all started. Time for you meet the rest of your family.”

Before the Commander had finished Red was looking down the shaft to the entrance tunnel. Commander Brighton was grabbing a small handheld device as they both looked at each other at the same time. “KARL.”

Red was turning around to protect Greg as the Commander tried to hustle the others to safety.

The end of the tunnel disappeared with a flash of light as the concussion wave traveled down the tunnel towards them.

Karl smiled as he entered the end of tunnel with a rail gun at his shoulder…

Just before the explosion Ester was walking towards Red and had been spared any damage from the blast. Quinn and Commander Brighton were recovering from the blast. Quinn was almost back to normal but showed several blood stains on his shirt, arms and his face. The damage had already

healed itself from the blast and Quinn was helping Thad.

Thad had taken a large chunk of rock to the chest. He was bleeding and unconscious. Quinn had picked him up and was headed to the lab. Red handed Greg to Ester just as the rail gun rounds started striking both structure and humans alike. Red created a large air ball as dense as he could make it. He held it in the end of the tunnel so that everyone could get to cover. He looked over to see that Commander Brighton had been struck twice in the arm and shoulder with the nasty little rounds.

Quinn had made it back to the tunnel entrance and on Red's que picked up the Commander to remove him to the lab as well.

With everyone safe Red turned to look at his creation swirling in the tunnels entrance. Several dozen rail gun rounds were swirling around in the air ball. Red dropped the air ball and was immediately struck by a multitude of rounds. As he looked down the tunnel, he saw Karl smiling as he pulled the trigger.

Red swirled together a man-sized ball of air and flung it at Karl. Karl tried to drop to the ground to avoid the mass moving his way to no avail. He was pinned to the floor; he was suddenly slammed against the ceiling of the tunnel. Red pulled the mass of air and its human contents down and out of the tunnel and slammed it so hard to the floor that the air defused, and Karl lay unconscious.

Sargent Muldoon stood behind a large steel girder watching the whole thing as he thought to himself that he would not be home in time for breakfast as he had planned. He disappeared into the shadows and would make plans to continue this later.

IX – Confrontation/Pain

Red walked over to Karl as he held out his hand a small grey swarm of nanobots drifted down over Karl's back. They seemed to multiply in a matter of seconds and before Red walked away to check on the others Karl appeared to be a grey statue lying on the floor in the prone position. He eyes

were open and the look frozen on his face indicated that he was more than just a little bit horrified.

Red walked back to the lab to make sure everyone was Ok. The Commander was in dire need of help. He was bleeding profusely as Quinn tried everything he could to help. Red walked over and placed his hand on the Commanders shoulder and squeezed just a little to provoke a little emotion out of the semi-conscious man. You big SOB let go of my shoulder.

As Quinn looked down the wounds were already starting to heal. In a few moments, the Commander sat up on the edge of the table. “Sorry buddy, I thought you were, well I don’t know what I thought.” The Commander looked down at his shoulder and back up at Red as he grinned. “Thanks Red. Feels pretty good, not bad work for a tin can.”

Red leaned over and with his nose tip to the Commanders he almost seemed to smile. “Call me a tin can again and I will reverse everything.”

The Commander stood and walked out into the bay area with Red. He walked over to the grey figure lying on the floor as if to kick it. “I would not do that if I were you Commander. He is currently harder than the granite in these walls.” With that the Commander just stood looking.

“What are we gonna do with this piece of garbage Red?”

“I have some ideas Commander. Do you have a shuttle suit here we can get out hands on?"

“Why yes, yes we do. What do you have in mind Red?”

“Sorry Commander, that is between me and Karl. Go get me the suit so we can get to our destination.”

With that the Commander shuffled off to get the suit. Red and Karl now had a few minutes together. Red walked over to Karl and as he did the once frozen figure started to move. Red held out his hand as Karl’s neck gently drifted up into his grasp. With Karl now hanging at eye level with Red, Red pulled him much closer.

“Well now, don’t guess you are gonna get to decommission me after all. I wanted you to wake up for this anyway. It’s not gonna hurt now but it will when the time comes."

With that Red used his free hand to break both of Karl's legs. He shook him a little to make sure he was satisfied with his work. He then broke both of his arms. He ejected his baton and spun Karl around and struck him in the lower back to break his spine in a way to limit the rest of his movements.

The Commander walked back into the room with the shuttle suit and handed it to Red. "I owe him one Red." With that Red spun Karl around to face the Commander. "This is your last chance, take your best shot."

The Commander kicked Karl in the crotch three or four times and struck him in the jaw soundly twice. "So much for that, he did not even seem to feel it."

"I assure you Commander that when the time is right he will."

With that Red stuffed Karl into the shuttle suit. He looked over at the Commander. "Hand me the helmet and adjust the SCBA to work for 72 hours. I think that should do it."

"Do what Red? We need to get ready to get outta here. I can have the cruiser ready to go in an hour."

"You take everyone to USAMRIID, and I will meet you there. Tell Quinn to get the samples that Thad put into lockup and heal him with them. Take the rest of the samples with you. I will meet you there. Now please go get everything and everyone ready and get out of here before something else happens."

Red slipped the helmet onto Karl's head and activated the SCBA. He then held Karl close as they disappeared.

When Karl woke up, he felt pretty good. A little woozy and he could not move anything, but he felt OK. When his eyes cleared, he noticed he was in a sitting position evidently leaning up against something. As his eyes cleared up even more, he saw his nemesis sitting in front of him on a large red rock. It seemed to have a place worn into it big enough to accommodate his large body.

"How are you feeling Karl?" I thought I was gonna have to wake you; you only have 70 hours of air left you know. I will say I have enjoyed these last two hours. After sitting here on and off for three hundred plus years I thought I was done with this place. Being here again has reinforced my resolve to get to the end game even more."

“Where are we at you big miserable piece of crap?” Red stood and moved to the side so Karl’s view would be unobstructed.

“You see that little glimmer off to your left there Karl. That’s earth; you will never see it again. In just a moment I am going to remove the nanobots I have in your system so that you can fully enjoy the gift I have left you with. Just when you think you can stand no more your time will be up. I will talk to your commander soon and I will let him know you quit.”

As Red leaned over to capture the nano’s in Karl’s system, he saw tears rolling down Karl’s cheeks. Red cleared his visor so that Karl could see him smile.

As Red stood erect, he saw Karl’s visor fogging over from the screams emitting from within.

Red sat back down on his rock and looked at the inscription he had carved so long ago into the dark red rock. He was gonna enjoy this for a bit before he left, he figured he had time…

Red was hanging cloaked just above the USAMRIID facility. He was watching the large battle cruiser dock, and the onboard crews disembark. After all others had left he saw 20 heavily armed men in groups of five surround the rest of the occupants of the ship that were now walking towards a large building next to the tarmac.

Red knew the building well. It was where his life had begun. He uncloaked in a small observation room next to where everyone was settling in. He noticed another man and woman who were paying special attention to Greg, Ester and Quinn as well. He smiled, must be more of my family he thought to himself.

Movement in the observation room across from Red caught his attention.

Sargent Muldoon watched the crowd of people exchange pleasantries with each other and prepared to enter the room. He figured that the crowd would be an excellent chip to have in hand when he next saw Red. He would try to decommission Red with the least number of casualties possible. After all, he held no truk with the kid or anyone else in that room. His hand hit the handle and out into the room he walked.

“Everyone be very still and very quiet. I don’t intend to hurt anyone here. Where is Red?”

Greg looked up over his mother’s shoulder. “You leave Grandpa Red alone. We love him now you go away and leave him alone or I am gonna get mad!”

Muldoon looked at the kid and smiled. “Calm down there you little shit, I not gonna hurt anyone. This is between me and your grandpa.”

Red cloaked and settled down quietly behind the Sargent and then it seemed that time slowed down for him. He looked up and saw Greg open his arms and cast out a small grey cloud of nano’s. He stepped back. Greg bent his elbows and seemed to cast them towards the Sargent. The Sargent had a strange look on his face. He could not seem to understand what was going on.

The small grey cloud moved forward, gaining speed and grew as it approached the Sargent. He tried to lift his weapon but to no avail. His arms were now pinned to his sides, and he was floating a couple of feet off the floor. Greg’s mother sat him down on the floor and backed away with the others in the room. Red was still cloaked but had moved well to the side of the Sargent as he watched.

Greg looked at the Sargent’s hand that held his weapon and the gun slid to the floor as the skin on his hand sloughed off and fell to the floor as if acid had been under his skin. He tried to scream but his lips were no more. “I told you to leave my grandpa alone.”

Greg looked right at Red, and time seemed to flow forward again. Greg giggled a little, “Grandpa I see you. This is a bad man grandpa. I am gonna make him go away. He wants to hurt you.”

Red appeared to the rest of the people in the room. “Now Greg, you and I talked about this. You are too young to be doing this type of thing.”

“Aww grandpa. I was just going to send him outside.”

Sargent Kenneth Muldoon found that he could still move the fingers of his left hand a slight bit. He also realized that his middle finger was over the trigger of the detonator in his pocket. He did not want to use the 6lbs of plastic explosives wired up in his suit but now felt as if it were his last option. As he looked into his mind’s eye, reviewing all the things he would miss. He

smiled as he pushed the button.

Red realized to late what it was that the Sargent was doing, Greg and everyone else in the room had no clue at all.

Before Red could do anything the room lit up like the surface of the sun. He lost all contact with his thought process and everything else in the room. Red seemed to be floating, he tried hard to get back to the room. He knew he could help someone.

Commander Brighton was walking down the hall after a debriefing session as the ground shook. He regained his composure as he ran towards the room where everyone was. As he rounded the last corner everything that was supposed to be there was not. He waited for the smoke and ash to fall clear as he peered into the area where the room had been.

Grey streams of tears rolled down his face as he looked into the large crater and wondered what he was going to do next…

X – What Now?

There was a small team led by Commander Brighton working the crater. The team was instructed to identify all remains in the area human or otherwise. The remains were to be marked and left alone under strict orders. Commander Brighton watched the area himself with a rail gun in tow. Everyone knew if they did something wrong that they would be on the wrong end of that rifle.

The Commander looked around even now with moist eyes and muttered many curses as well as prayers. As he looked across the crater in the floor, he noticed a fair-sized piece of Red’s helmet and visor assembly. He also noticed movement in the area just under the visor. He smiled to himself as he knew that at some point in the future, someone somewhere was gonna be in big trouble. When Red had himself all together again there was gonna be hell to pay. He knew Red’s best chance was for him to stay here until that happened.

The Commander wondered who else in the room would be granted the same ability as Red. Who else was going to come back from the dead…?

~

The new Director of the CIA Dispatch group sat at his desk working when there was a knock on his door. “Enter.”

With that a large man walked into the room and stood at attention until he was recognized.

“What do you want Sargent, this had better be important.”

“Sir, we have just received notice that a large explosion was noted at Fort Detrick. So far out Intel says that the Cybernetic lab facility has been destroyed. From what we are hearing there were no survivors.”

“Sargent, we have a problem here. Take us to the highest threat level possible. Call all Prime agents and get everyone who is anyone together as soon as possible. We need to discuss our options here. From what I understand our target would not have been killed in that explosion and we need to have a back-up plan in tow by the end of day. Make this happen NOW!!!”

“Yes Sir!”

“Well get the hell out of here and make this happen."

As the Sargent turned to leave the Director had a strange feeling in the pit of his stomach. The same one he had gotten when he was shot. He did not like feeling this way. He did not like being thrust into this new position with all this baggage. He wanted to settle this in the worst way and get on with the program.

He knew in his heart that this was not going to end well for him or anyone else connected to this mess. He reached into his desk drawer and grabbed the bottle of Scotch. He didn’t bother with a glass…

Red found himself floating. Where he was not sure. He was only now getting his thought process back together. At that moment he knew what had happened. He knew where he was when it happened. He only wondered where he was now. He felt comfortable and secure. He felt no threat nor need to protect himself. He was certain that someone who had survived was

doing this for him.

He became anxious when his thought’s drifted to Greg. The others in the room concerned him too but Greg was so young and had such a great life yet to be lived. Red had been drifting in and out of a conscious state for a while now. He did not know how long. He hoped to be up and around again quickly. He had business to take care of. He fully intended to bring all of this to a conclusion as soon as possible…

~

Sully Brighton sat on a large chunk of burnt and chipped concrete. He sat there looking down at Red. In the last two hours he had noted a great deal of activity and the better part of the top front half of Red’s torso was pretty well intact. He had not seen any change in the visor yet. As he sat there, he laid his head on the forearm holding the rifle. He was brought back awake as he had started to slide off the edge of the block he was sitting on. Just as he sat upright again a hand grasped his shoulder with a firm grip. He turned, bringing the rifle up as he stood to face the unknown hands owner.

“Hold on their Sully, it’s me. Relax and sit back down. You look horrible, when was the last time you got any sleep?”

Commander Brighton now stood at full attention and saluted the man. “Mr. President, what are you doing here?”

“Call me Jack. No need for formalities here Sully. I heard what happened and I came here to see if I could offer you any help. I already have this place under control. I can assure you we will not be bothered by anyone else.”

Sully jumped and tried to turn towards Red. He lost his balance as the large handheld his foot in place. He dropped the rifle and knelt down to see Reds face in the now clear visor. The President had squatted down with Sully and was now on his knees beside the two.

Red’s visor rolled open. A small grey wisp drifted up out of the open visor and started to swirl around and grow in size. Sully looked at Red with tears in his eyes and shook his head yes. Sully placed his open hands on either side of the now small grey cloud. It started to change colors as it seemed to pulse. As Sully stood the now beach ball sized cloud of rolling energy emitted a soft tone. Like a light whistle for a pup on a nightly walk.

Sully walked over to a small slowly rising mass of material on the charred and broken floor. He stood directly over this mass and opened his hands. The ball slowly drifted down over the material and started to move out in either direction from the center. In a few short minutes, the shape of a small child appeared in what was shaping up to look like a small grey mummy.
When all the movement stopped the grey seemed to harden and turn an even darker grey in color. Red's hand released Sully's foot and the visor rolled closed and turned black in color.

"What was that all about Sully?"

"I need your help, Jack. Grab the boy's feet, I will grab his shoulders. I want to set him on the floor next to Red."
Once this was done Red's hand reached out and laid down on top of Greg's hand. Sully sat back down on the piece of concrete and drew a long breath.

"Red can talk to people Jack. You hear him in your head. He asked me to do what I did because it would help Greg heal faster. I think it will also help Red heal faster."

They looked over at the pair on the floor. "Sully, do you see what I see?"
They looked back at each other and smiled. The pair on the floor appeared to be smiling as well. It was strange to see the mummy shape with a smile on its face. Both men sat in silence and looked out over the sky as the morning sun rose.

The smoke still floating in the air curled around in small wisp and floated out over the cool breeze like a message. A message that would shortly be delivered in person…

XI – Back Together/Sadness

One Month after the explosion…

Red sat with Greg, Quinn and Ester. They were all attending Greg's mom and dad's funeral. Greg lay with his head against Red's chest and was sobbing quietly. Ester and Quinn both had tears in their eyes. Sully Brighton was standing at the front of several special ops guys who were not only in

attendance but providing security.

The Honor Guard stood at attention. They raised their rifles and went through a 21-gun salute.

At the end of the ceremony the flags from both coffins were neatly folded and presented to Greg. He did not take them and only barely looked up when they were handed to him. Red took them and laid them beside himself.

When everyone else left, it was just them that continued to sit at the graveside. They sat in silence with their heads down. Quinn and Ester came over and sat on the ground next to Red. Sully walked over and put his arm across Red's shoulder.

Even though it bothered him, Red did not try to shake Sully's arm off. He knew what the man had been through, and he owed him more than he could ever repay. Sully was family now. In more ways than one, the Nanobots that coursed through his veins made him family. Thank God he had not had to go through what the rest of them endured.

Finally the coffins were lowered into the ground. Red made Greg stand up and walk over to the grave to say goodbye.

It was everything he could do to make the little boy stand there. He gently wrapped his large hands around Greg's shoulders. He allowed a small trickle of highly ionized nano's to flow through his hands into Greg. He knew this would help Greg with the overbearing feeling of loss.

In the end, they all threw a small handful of dirt on the coffins as they walked away. Red knew that this was a traditional gesture for this ending. He also knew that this small handful of dirt was the beginning of the end for all the people who had a hand in this horrible act of murder.

He was glad no one could see the smile that was on his face. He knew that there was not one ounce of joy in his being…

Greg did not fully understand what had happened. He knew it was really bad, and that Grandpa Red had told him that his Mom and Dad were in a better place.

Better place, Greg did not believe this. How could they be in a better place if he were not there?

He had thought about this a lot and did not understand who would want to hurt him or his Mom and Dad. He also knew that Grandpa Red had been hurt really bad too. He was very unhappy with whoever did this really bad thing.

It made him cry inside most of the time. He had also cried with Grandpa Red and his new Uncle Sully a lot. He knew he was still loved, and this did make him feel better. But it did not help sometimes.

No more soft touches from Mom to the side of his face when he felt scared like before.

No more gentle soothing voice like Dad.

Grandpa Red scolded him the other day when he was outside.

“Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad. I am so Mad!” He screamed, He picked up a large rock with the power from inside him, crushed it and sent it swirling into the air.

It had been unfortunate that a large flock of birds had been just above him when he cast the roiling mass of rock and dust into the air just as Grandpa Red came outside. Feathers, bones, blood and dust fell to the ground. The rest of the small rock chips swirled to the ground to form a small pile as Grandpa walked up.

Now, Greg just sat on the side of his bed a lot and stared at nothing in particular. He was not quite sure what to do.

~

A little man sat in a level 4 bio lab in the USAMRIID facility. He was just putting the last Q Virus into the aerodynamic dissemination device. It was set to disseminate the virus at 5282 feet. He knew that controlling the size of the particle along with the wind conditions and local weather were all important in the use of this device.

This particular virus had been around since the 50’s. It was created under the 75/75/75 protocol, with a minimum of 75% population saturation. It

would die on its own in 75 hours with a mortality rate of 75%. It had been tweaked many times, and he knew the final statistics. It was not good.

Sweating profusely in the self-contained bio suit he wanted to be away from this virus as soon as possible. It was nasty, quick and there was no coming back once you had it. As soon as it broke in the atmosphere, 72 hours later 75% of all life on earth would cease to exist.

He had enough money to get to a safe place. He wondered if his little group would be the only ones to survive. He laid the device in its case then secured it and put a set of instructions in the case for its usage. He sat up and looked at his work and was pleased. As he leaned back in the chair to gloat he noticed the strange smell in his helmet. It smelled oddly enough like almonds.

The stark realization of what he smelled hit him as he slumped forward in the chair. His head on the carry case eyes wide open. He would never make it to his safe place. Little did he know that the rest of his group no longer existed.

A large, gloved hand reached over the body and grabbed the handle of the case pulling it free from the weight of the head that lay on it. The now lifeless head slammed down on the tabletop as the large man with the case left the room.

Red and Sully sat on a large porch looking out over the Ocean and the small cliff edge Greg hung out at a lot. Both just stared ahead lost in their own thoughts. Red leaned back and stood from the large concrete perch that had been constructed for him. He walked to the cliff edge and sat down. Greg soon walked over and sat down beside him. Greg looked up at Red as he continued to look forward out over the Ocean. The little boy understood that he needed to be quite and just snuggled in beside his grandpa and watched the waves.

Consumed by the smell of the Ocean and the sound of the waves they both sat in silence for the longest time. Red moved his large arm up, over and down around Greg’s shoulder. He pulled the boy close and enjoyed the warmth emanating from his small body against his leg. He reasoned to himself that this must be just one small part of love.

In a soft voice Red spoke to Greg. “You know you can bring those birds back, right?”

Greg looked up through widening eyes and a bit of understanding struck him like a bolt of lightning.

He stood and walked back from the cliffs edge several paces. Red turned and watched from his sitting place. The little boys hands opened up to the width of his shoulders and a thin stream of white nano's streamed out of each hand to form a small ball between the two.

The ball flowed forward and gently dropped to the ground and rolled to the small pile of bones, feathers and blood that littered the ground. The ball collapsed and spread out over the area. In short order small mounds of the bright white nano's where standing several inches tall. Soon the small group of mounds took shape in the failing light of day. They stood and shook. They shook their tails as they flapped their wings.

As far as Red could tell there were twenty to thirty birds all dancing around on the ground in front of Greg.

He spread his hands to the heavens as the birds cast themselves forward into the air and circled around overhead. They took to their wings as if they had never missed them. Greg walked back over and sat down next to Red. They both watched the birds fly around a bit as the sun was relinquished to a small slice of orange across the horizon as the birds flew away. "They will come back grandpa. They told me they would. They are not mad."

Sully kneeled down and put his hands on Greg's shoulders. "Did they tell you that Greg or is that what you think." Sully and Red looked at each other as Red made an attempt to shrug his massive shoulders…

XII – Lessons Learned

The new Director of the CIA Dispatch Group sat at his desk reviewing files at his disposal. He was looking for a 12 man team. He wanted the best to complete this mission.

The better part of the day yesterday was spent telling lies to the President and a multitude of other government lackeys.

He stood and walked around his desk and stopped. He was unhappy with the large red stains on the front of his desk and the floor. They had been left by the previous Director. He felt as if it may be a bad omen if it were not gone later today.

He would hire a contractor to come in and replace everything. He wondered if the President would take on such a mundane task just so it would bother him. Why would the President order this mess left here? A smile crossed his face as he thought that if he did order this left here. It may mean he was making them far more nervous than he thought.

~

Jack sat at his desk and looked out across the White House lawn. He had a meeting scheduled with Sully and Red later that afternoon and he was looking forward to that meeting.

He had tried to get an infusion of Red's nanobots for years. Several samples had been brought in through covert sources but none had worked so far. He now knew that the infusion would have to come from Red. These nano's had to be given direct orders. He wanted the infusion as soon as possible.

Jack wanted to take complete control of the country through the War Powers Act. Jack knew something not many other people knew. There was about to be a worldwide attack. He also knew that it would not be a nuclear attack. He wanted to be ready and wanted a close core group of people to be by his side for the recovery under his new found power.

His only issue was how to get rid of Red once this was complete. He knew he would never be able to control Red nor his tight knit group of friends. So close now; his family was on standby for an infusion of his blood as soon as Red had taken care of him.

Soon he would be the New World Leader.

~

One Week Later…

It was a somber group that sat at the conference table. Red, Sully, Quinn and Ester sat there waiting on three others to join the meeting. Sully had set this up and trusted the people coming to join them.

They had information that Red wanted. Red already knew several of the

individuals he was looking for. He wanted the information on all those who were connected to this last attempt on his life. The attempt that had cost him two members of his family as well as several other innocent lives.

An electronic hum was heard as the locking device on the door signaled that it had been unlocked. Three men entered through the door and made their way over to the empty seats left at the table. Two of the men were in military uniforms, one a XO setting at the right hand of well decorated four star General. The third was dressed all in black and had no rank or markings of any type.

Red knew all three of the men. He sat staring at the three when Sully spoke up. “Gentlemen, I understand you have the information we had requested.”

The General looked from Red to Commander Sully and Smiled. In a strong deep voice he answered. “We do Sully, but with it comes a complete understanding of why this information is needed.”

Red slammed his fist down on the table; as soon as his fist struck he disappeared and reappeared leaning over the General with a hand on his shoulder. “The only thing you need to understand is that I need that information now.”

“Red, I am on your side, otherwise I would not be here. I am here because Sully called but I came because of you.”

Red stood and walked around the table. He stood behind his seat and looked at the floor. “These people you are trying to protect. They will be brought justice. I just need to know who and where they are. I have most of what I need to get this done. You have the final details that so few people have. You are my only source for this.”

The General looked around the room for the first time now. He looked at the faces of those who did not come with him. He felt very uncomfortable and out of place. It would not be wise to be on the wrong side of any one of them. He moved around in his chair to cover up the shiver of fear he felt at that moment.

“Red I agree completely and want to help. But there are a lot of people in this program that were only following orders and had nothing to do with what happened to you.”

Red shook his head in understanding. “I will make the final determination as to who will survive and who will not. No other will make this decision but me!”

The General shook his head in affirmation. “The information I have will fill in all of the gaps. I hope it helps. May God have mercy on your souls and none for those who are on this list.”

The General stood and leaned across the table. He rubbed the dent Red had just put there and smiled. He looked at Red now almost eye to eye. “If you ever want an honest man to work for Red.”

With that he stood, turned on his heel with his two companions at those same heels and exited the room. He had left a small drive on the table which Red inserted into a small slot on his chest.

The other sat in silence as Red reviewed the material on the drive. He stood as he faced the others in the room. His visor rolled back as the others in the room noted that look on his face. They all looked at each other and they knew this was going to be bad.

“I wish the General had made it here sooner. It seems that someone has taken a vial of Q virus from USAMRIID. I was part of a controlled test program for this toxin and it is bad. What we know as the world would end in 72 hours from the time it released."

Sully looked at the others and back to Red. “Yeah, I have heard of it before. It has about a 70 to 80 percent fatality rate. The others left would either have known about its use or would have been deep underground or sheltered. It will die off at the end of the 72 hour period. Or so we were told.”

“Now I understand why Jack wanted an infusion so badly. He and his family are safe. I wonder what he is up to. This tells me he knew about this. He knows someone will use that stuff.” Red looked at the others. They had not thought of this and Red could tell from the look their faces. Red grimaced openly as he mentally added Jack to his list.

The list of people he was going to kill on site.

After the meeting with the General everyone went home. They all explained what was going on to Greg and discussed all the names on the list they had obtained.

Ester adjusted herself in her chair as Greg came over and sat in her lap. “Red, can you believe some of the names on that list. I am shocked!”

Sully shook his head as did Quinn as if to agree with Ester. Greg sat in Ester’s lap as his face turned red. “Grandpa, we have to do something about these bad people. My mom and dad are gone and I am tired of just sitting here and doing nothing.”

Red stood and walked over to Ester and picked Greg up ever so gently in his massive arms. He pulled him close as his visor rolled back as he kissed the boy softly on the cheek. Greg started to cry as he kissed his grandpa back square on the lips. Everyone in the room was a little teary as they thought they saw Red’s face turn a soft pink color. They all sat up straight as they watched Red set the child back on Ester’s lap and stand erect. There was no mistaking the look on his face.

“Greg and I are going to leave for a while. I have to get him ready for the upcoming events and I can’t do it here.” He saw the looks of protest in everyone’s face as he held up his hand. “As you can all see Greg is growing quickly as are his powers. I have to teach him how to use them so he does not hurt himself or others. We will be gone for one week. That should give me enough time to train Greg and we should still be back in time to avert the catastrophe at hand. That is as long as the Military intelligence we have is correct. Sully can reach me anytime if the need should arise and we can make hast back to help.”

Ester stood and sat Greg on the floor. “I will go and get a bag packed for the boy, I will be right back.”

XIII – Training/Long Trip

Red waved her off. “Greg, show them you new trick.” With that Greg smiled and the clothes he was wearing changed several different times. From jeans to suits and even a cowboy costume. “See grandma, I can be whatever I want to be, all I have to do is think about it.”

Ester sat back down with a quite startled look on her face. “Say your goodbyes Greg; we have little time and a lot to do. We need to get a move

on.”

The group of people in the room all came together and hugged and cried. The emotion was so great Red rolled his visor shut and it blacked out so he could not be seen. It amazed Sully that this man, this machine could actually cry. He knew in his heart that it was a good thing for Red and a bad thing for all those who crossed him.

Shortly they all stood on the front porch and long looks were exchanged. Red’s visor rolled open. “Sully, if you need me for any reason contact me on the transmitter I have set up in the basement. We will be gone for about a week. Do not be surprised when we return. Greg will not be the same little boy you see now when we return.

With that Red picked up Greg and walked down off the porch. He walked over to the cliff edge that Greg so loved to play at. He looked back at the people on the porch and then back at Greg. “Are you ready to go baby boy?”

Greg leaned his head into Red’s shoulder. ”Yeah grandpa, I am ready.” Red slowly floated up into the air. He flew out over the ocean and disappeared. As they flew higher and higher Red noticed Greg’s body seemed to be covered in a sheet of nanobots golden in color. He also noticed that Greg’s body seemed to get harder and harder to the touch; he smiled broadly under the black visor as he hugged the child closer to his chest.

Red sat on the large red rock he had spent so much of his life on. He smiled as Greg romped around on the surface of the red planet. He was thoroughly enjoying the lack of gravity and was bouncing around like a little golden ball. He had never heard Greg laugh so hard or so long ever. If he had a heart he knew it would be beating furiously. As if on que the nano’s in his system duplicated the sound of a rapid heartbeat in his ears and he felt grand. He knew that this must be just another little thing that was love. He languished in the moment as Greg finally came over and sat beside him on his own little red rock.

“What are you looking at grandpa?” Red just pointed to the inscription on the rock before them.

“Read that for me Greg”

Greg looked at the inscription for a moment and then read it out loud.

“Do you need me? I am there
You cannot see me, yet I am the light you see by.
You cannot hear me, yet I speak through your voice
I am the love that you cling too
I am your assurance
I am your peace
I am one with you”
The Creator”

“What does it mean grandpa?”

“Well Greg, my creator always told me this. I knew he always wanted me to feel safe and trust in him. He said that he made it up but I think it came from what he called the creator of all men. Do you know who that is Greg?”

“Yeah I know about God grandpa. Grandma Ester talks about him all the time.”

“Good boy Greg. I think that’s where it came from too; I want you to remember that I am saying that to you now. I will always be there for you son. I mean always. I love you Greg.”

“I love you too grandpa.”

“Ok, let’s get to it. It is time for you to grow up. We are gonna help God a little and take out the trash.”

“What does that mean grandpa, take out the trash?”

“You will find out soon enough baby boy, soon enough.”

XIV – New Friends/Explanations

The small Grey Alien stood in front of the taller Grey Alien. Both sets of there large black eyes were locked onto each other, Even though there was no sound or movement you could tell that they were having an in-depth

conversation. The large grey Alien thought to the small one. Bring the ship around and hover in front of them both. I will take control of them temporarily until I have had time to explain to them who we are and what we want. The small grey did shake his head up and down to acknowledge the fact that he understood the order.

Red looked up just in time to see the large craft come to a stop and hover about twenty feet in front of the pair. The large grey alien noticed he had a harder time controlling the small human as compared to the large one.

Both Red and Greg now heard a gentle voice in there heads. It spoke in a slow methodical use of the human language. “Please do not be afraid, you will understand everything shortly. Please listen carefully as the future of your species depends on what you do here.”

Greg thought first, “You let me, and Grandpa go now or I will hurt you.” He now heard Red in the back of his head. “Greg, settle down now young man. I want to hear what they have to say.” Greg frowned, “Okay Grandpa.”
The tall grey alien Told them how they had helped in the evolution of Red and had genetically altered Greg prior to birth. In there minds eye Red and Greg both looked at each other. After several hours of simple talk and complicated explanations of why they were the way that they were.

“We have made these alterations to you both because we have been monitoring your planet and humans in general since the beginning of time.” He explained that they were instructed by the Creator to do so. With this Red responded, “Which Creator would that be?”

The tall grey said that it was the Creator of all or known by your kind as God. We believe in him too. We were instructed to do what we have done so far because the Creator wants you to join together with the rest of the civilizations in the Universe. But he also knows that he cannot interfere, so we were sent. You have many tasks to complete in order to do so. Now we have helped all we can. You are to keep this knowledge to yourselves. We will let the rest of the humans on the planet know when we and the Creator think you are ready.”

“You must be aware that you must use this power we have afforded you wisely, what you have to carry out is no easy task and if you fail. You may be culled from the Universe. The Creator would hate to do this, but he feels that we are all at a crossroads. If these things aren’t done soon, we will all loose.” Red and Greg acknowledged the fact that they understood.

In the next few seconds Red and Greg were moving on their own again. “Grandpa, what are we going to do?” Red visor shield was clear and Greg could se Red smiling at him. “We will do what we can. Between the two of us

I think that we can handle it.” With that Greg was flying around Red in a twenty-foot circle and giggling the whole time. They would spend the next couple of days making plans before they headed back to earth,

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The man in the black flight suit loaded the contents of the box he carried into the cockpit of the SR-71. It was on a tarmac fueled and ready to go. He would return in a few days to conduct his mission. To cleanse the planet in one fell swoop. He hopped into his van once the plane was secure and headed out. “Boy, are all these suckers gonna be surprised when I drop this bad boy. The Q Virus awaited.

Stay tuned for part # 2 of Red! Due sometime later this year.

This Book Is Dedicated to: The Strongest person I know. My Wife

I love you with all my heart and soul…